



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



Ritson  
Ritson  
AN







THE  
**Letters**  
 OF  
 JOSEPH RITSON, Esq.

**TO WHICH IS PREFIXED**

A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

**BY SIR HARRIS NICOLAS, K. C. M. G.**

**IN TWO VOLUMES.**

**VOL. II.**

**Urit enim fulgore suo, qui praegravat artes  
Infra se positas : extinctus amabitur idem.**

**HOR.**

**LONDON :**  
**WILLIAM PICKERING.**

**1833.**

THE NEW YORK  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX  
TILDEN FOUNDATION

LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. NICOL, CLEVELAND-ROW, ST. JAMES'S.

1807 W. 31  
1807 W. 31  
1807 W. 31



# Letters.

CV.

TO MR. PATON.

SIR,

Grays Inn, 8th January, 1793.

I deferred, perhaps improperly, the acknowledgement of your favours of the 8th and 17th ultimo till the arrival of the small parcel you mentioned, which I expected some weeks since, but did not receive till yesterday.

I am much obliged both to you and to the gentleman who took the trouble to go through my list of old Scottish words, many of which, I must presume, are become altogether obsolete and unintelligible, or confined, at least, to some remote part of the country, as I cannot assent to every explanation your friend has given; though I shall rest satisfied with what I have done, and neither give you, myself nor any one else further trouble about the matter. I am very thankful for the

reference to Jocelines Life of St. Mungo, which I shall immediately see after.

You must cease to consider Lord Hailes as a *most faithful publisher*; as I who have collated many of his articles with the Bannatyne MS. know the contrary to my cost. I do not, indeed, mean to say that he is so intentionally faithless as Ramsay; but I do say that his transcripts have been very inaccurate, that he has in numerous instances wilfully altered the original orthography, and not unfrequently misinterpreted the text of the MS. which I suspect he was occasionally unable to read. I am much obliged by your offer of a copy of his Lordships publication; but you will permit me to inform you that I possess not only this, but almost every other volume of Scottish poetry, ancient or modern, hitherto printed—except your *Godly Songs*; and am nearly as perfect in Scottish history.

I am now satisfied that no one can tell me from good authority what was the vulgar language of the South of Scotland in the XIIth century; I, however, entirely concur with you in *opinion*, that it was the English Saxon. Did I mention to you that I had got a genuine Scottish song of the year 1289?

The Gaelic MS. mentioned by your friend to be

in the Advocates Library, I suppose I saw. I know nothing of Gaelic, but the character, I perceive, is Irish, and the writing, as I conjecture of the last century; at any rate not of Robert Bruce's time. I should be glad of a faithful translation of that part of the MS. in which the author speaks of himself, his age or country; as I am anxious to be convinced of the existence of a Gaelic MS.

Your edition of the "Seven Sages," seems equally rare with the two former: I mentioned it to Mr. Chalmers, who means to favour the public with an exact account of the origin and progress of Scottish typography, by way of preface, as I conceive, to his *Life of Ruddiman*.

I observed, in consequence of a query in your first letter, that John Knox is in an old book, in my possession, intitled "Ane disputation concerning the controversit headis of religion, &c." Paris, 1581, generally stiled "Schir John Kmnnox;" and you will find, I presume, that he was a secular priest, who had taken his degree of *M. A.* at the University: a character to which I believe the Popes Knighthood was confined.

There is a collection of "Ancient Songs" lately published by Johnson in St. Pauls Churchyard, in which Dr. Percys theory of the old English Minstrels is criticised and perhaps confuted: I am

sorry I have not a copy of it for your acceptance; I wish, however, you would please to inform me how I can send you any thing of this kind sooner or easier than you can procure it by means of the booksellers in Edinburgh.

I am sorry to say that Dr. Farmer has not been able to find the volume of tracts containing "Sir D. Lindsays Satire." He supposes it to have been lent to Mr. Malone, to whom Mr. Steevens has promised to make immediate application. But perhaps you have already learned that Pinkerton has lately published these satires from a (very incorrect) copy of the Hyndford MS. together with the various readings of the printed edition : published under the name of J. Nichols, for C. Dilly in the Poultry, 3 vols. crown 8vo. price 9s. He has had the impudence and dishonesty to insert in this collection a curious old MS. poem in my possession, of which a friend of his had some years since surreptitiously obtained a copy, and which on that friends application from him, I positively refused my leave to print. He, or some one for him, (Mr. Cardonnel, I presume) has had the use of the old volume of tracts in the Advocates Library.

I have been able to meet with no further intelligence about Sir Alexander Halket. He is said

to be the author of *Gilderoy*, and I strongly suspect him to have had a principal hand in the forgery of *Hardyknute*, which is all that I know of him.

I am sorry to find that business should press so hard upon you at a time of life which should be devoted to ease and indulgence, and the more so as it deprives the public of all benefit from the exertion of those talents, and that knowledge of men and books of which they have had so tantalizing a specimen.

I am, Sir,

Very sincerely and respectfully yours

J. RITSON.

P. S. When you call in at Mr. Laings shop, please to tell him that I have not yet received the parcel of books from his Catalogue.

---

CVI.

TO MR. WADESON.

DEAR WADESON,      Grays Inn, 16th Jan. 1793.

I have so long been in the habit of considering my sisters constitution as precarious, that I am

far from surprised, though certainly not unaffected, with the account you give me of her present situation. It may be impossible to prolong life, but it is frequently in our power to smooth the approaches of death ; and they who die happily are certainly more to be envied than those who live otherwise. It is at any rate a great consolation that my sister has such attention shewn her at a time when she has the most occasion for it. I am fully sensible both of Miss Rowntrees merits and of your own ; having indeed had repeated instances of both. With respect to the funeral, in case of the worst, you will be so good as attend to any request my sister herself may make, provided there be nothing very singular in it or out of the way. Otherwise, I should wish the ceremony to be conducted with as much plainness and frugality as can be decently adopted. No scarfs given, nor any gloves, except to the bearers, who may be any four or half dozen men you think proper : I mean to carry the body to church with napkins ; and not by means of fellows concealed under a pall. Of every species of pride or expence I abominate and detest that most which is lavished on the dead. As to the rest, I leave every thing to your better judgment and the common usage : only I particularly request there may

be no singing of *hymns* either in or out of church. You will of course make every person intitled to it an adequate recompense. There is 18*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.* due on account of her last years annuity, for which, as you must necessarily want money, whether she live or die, I will readily accept your or Mawlams draught. . . .

Though I am always glad to hear from you, I do not wish you to consult my curiosity at the expence of your own convenience. My sister will probably either die or do well in the course of a few days ; and it seems immaterial for you to trouble yourself with writing in the mean time. Give my love to her, if you please, and say I hope to hear of her getting better, and that I only forbear writing to her for the present, lest it should be injurious to her spirits. I also beg my grateful compliments to Miss Rowntree, and am,

Dear Wadeson,

Very sincerely yours

J. RITSON.

P. S. You may give Citizen Equality a hint that I find it prudent to say as little as possible upon political subjects, in order to keep myself out of Newgate.

## CVII.

TO MR. WILLIAM LAING.\*

DEAR SIR,

Grays Inn, Jan. 25, 1793.

I neither wish to depreciate your commodities, nor presume to give you advice. A copy of Belenden, fair and perfect, and in good outward condition, may be worth three guineas, and perhaps I should not hesitate to give so much for it myself; although three guineas, you must allow, is a great deal of money, *even in England*: but an imperfect book (and the imperfection is not at all removed by a MS. supplement) is, in my estimation, worth so very little, that I would not even thank you for the copy, yet desirable, on condition that I should be expected to keep it. If you get a guinea for it, you may reckon it well sold. The Douglas Virgil, 1553, I do not particularly wish for, if perfect: yours, of course, "a little stained, and MS. title," I rather consider as waste paper than a "great bargain" at 14s.

The library you allude to, if it answer your

\* The letters to this correspondent have been extracted from Mr. Nichols's "Illustrations of the literary history of the eighteenth century," (iii. 775.) ED.



description, will doubtless be a glorious acquisition ; and I shall be glad to know the articles of which it consists, and equally willing and ready to render you any service in my power, but you must be careful that the books are perfect ; otherwise you may depend upon it, unless you get them for an old song, they will never answer your purpose.

I wish you could hear of some careful person coming up who would take the trouble of Mr. Tytlers MS. Shoals of Scotchmen are arriving here every day ; the difficulty, I should imagine, would be to find one going back. Edinburgh, at the same time, is so very small a place, that you may be easily acquainted with the motions of every individual from your shop-door. Formerly, I have been told, when a Scotchman intended a journey to the South, he used to ring the cryers bell for a quarter of a year beforehand, in order to indemnify himself against the enormous expences of the Newcastle waggon, by the packets and parcels he got the charge of from his neighbours ; but at present, I suppose, the neighbours go too—not in the Newcastle waggon, I mean, but the mail-coach—*Tempora mutantur !*

I am sorry to hear of the indisposition of Cumyng, who seemed a very intelligent and res-

pectable man. It is, however, some consolation to you, on the approaching loss of a good friend, that you will get his library. I observe you do not answer my letters ; so that I shall have very little to say to you for the future.

I am sincerely yours

J. RITSON.

---

### CVIII.

TO MR. HARRISON.

DEAR SIR,

Grays Inn, 14th Feb. 1793.

I have been so constantly employed and fatigued by business for several weeks past that I have had no time and scarcely any inclination to attend to other matters of what urgency or importance soever : which must account, if it will not apologise, for my not having paid earlier notice to the contents of your last favour. It run in my head that I was to give you forty pounds *for the whole kitty* : if, however, as I collect from your letter, the sum was ten pounds more, I can only say that I have brewed a pretty kettle of fish, and brought my hogs to a fair market. As writing seems to be attended with some difficulty if not uneasiness,

you have only to put down a figure of 4 or 5 before a cypher to satisfy me of the verity of the matter : a nod, you know, is as good as a wink to a blind horse.

I was at a sale the other day where there were a few German books. I should have been glad to have got you Zimmermans " Fragmente uber Friedericken Grossen" but it happened not only to be sold before I got there, but went for more money than perhaps you would have been willing to give. If you wish for this or any other book that can be had in London, and do not mind the price, you will find me anxious to obey your commands.

You would see my name in the last Gentlemans Magazine. The scoundrel of an editor had the impertinence to omit the best part of my letter.

Try if it will not do better to put down your hints occasionally on a sheet of paper, just that is as you find yourself in the humour, and send it off when you please.

I am, dear Sir,

Very sincerely yours

J. RITSON.

## CIX.

TO THE EDITOR.

I inclose you a pamphlet lately published by Stewart (he does not deserve the name of citizen) which he represented to me as the first political production of the age. I mean of course to have no further acquaintance with him. . . .

I shall be glad to hear that you pay due attention to, and make yourself master of your professional and official business ; so far at least as not to talk of the Chancery side of the Exchequer. The thing is, to know as much as another man. Citizen Godwin is printing a novel. Health and fraternity !

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 18th Germinal 2.

## CX.

TO MR. WADESON.

DEAR WADESON,      Grays Inn, 20th April, 1793.

I am perfectly satisfied, or rather particularly pleased, with the manner in which your fair coadjutress and yourself appear to have conducted

my sisters funeral : and ought to be considered as a most ungrateful and worthless character if I ever forget the obligations I am under to you both.

There is a silver table spoon, and half a dozen (or a dozen) green handled knives and forks belonging to me which I wish you to preserve and send me, and Jo reminds me of a plaid, a Scotch bonnet and some other little nicknacks, which may as well be included in the parcel. Every thing else, I think, except what Jo himself has a mind to keep or give away, had best be sold as soon as convenient, and the produce applied so far as it will go, in payment of debts : Jo taking the surplus, if more than sufficient. . . . When all is settled, you will oblige me with a little bit of an account of every thing between us, as well before as since the commencement of my sisters illness.

I sent the five pounds to Alder on H. Williams's account immediately on receipt of your former letter, and shall be equally ready to execute any other commission you may choose to favour me with. I should be glad to know (I was about to say) upon what terms you have disposed of the house. But on second thoughts I fancy it is my sisters house not mine which you have been fortunate enough to get rid of. However you may

throw in a word or two about that in your next, if it is not too much trouble ; as, if it be not sold already, Ralph Hoar has no longer any thing to do with it, and I shall not be content with two hundred and fifty pounds, though I should be glad to get twenty or thirty more.

When you see Miss R. you will take the liberty to present my respectful compliments and grateful acknowledgments for the benevolent trouble she has taken on behalf of my poor sister.

I am, dear Wadeson,  
Very truly and sincerely yours  
J. RITSON.

---

## CXI.

## TO THE EDITOR.

DEAR NEPHEW,      Grays Inn, 23d April, 1793.

If there had been any hopes that the longer duration of your mothers life would have been accompanied with an increase of health and happiness, I should be very much concerned for her untimely loss ; but as we could not reasonably flatter ourselves that this would be the case, it

ought to afford us great consolation that her afflictions are at an end. I think you give a very sufficient reason for not attending her funeral, which appears, by a letter I have had from our friend Wadeson, to have been conducted with great propriety, and as nearly as possible according to her own request. I have desired him to consult you in the disposal of her little property. Her debts should be immediately paid, but as to the rest you will keep or give away what you think proper. The few things you mention together with a spoon (of which I have the fellow) and some knives and forks are all to which I shall lay any claim. The better to enable you to make immediate satisfaction of all demands and expences I am both ready and desirous to pay the arrears of her annuity to Ladyday last, amounting to twenty-eight pounds, seven shillings and sixpence, which (as I have already told Wadeson) I should wish him to draw upon me for at twenty or thirty days date. Whatever remains you will think yourself justly entitled to, and much good may it do you.

I recommend your constant and assiduous attention to business, and shall be always glad to hear that it is rewarded with success. You have nothing to depend on but your own merits and

exertions, as it is unfortunately out of my power to be of any service to you, though I shall not forget that I am           Your affectionate uncle

J. RITSON.

---

CXII.

TO THE SAME.

DEAR NEPHEW,           Grays Inn, 2d May, 1793.

You will allow me to be the better judge how far I am to consider myself indebted to your mother at her decease. It is not, however, *twenty-eight* pounds, seven shillings and six pence, but, (as I have since explained to Wadeson) *twenty-three* pounds, seven shillings and six pence, for which, if you have no immediate use or occasion, I shall be always ready, and hereby promise, to pay you on demand, with interest from the third of April. Had your mother died before the *twenty-fifth* of March the debt would have been ten pounds less. I have considered the matter and am perfectly correct.

I am very sorry to hear of the melancholy event which has taken place in Mr. Rowntrees family; though I do not clearly perceive how that event,



melancholy as it is, should render it necessary for him to dictate the letter I received from Mr. Coates : still less how that which he intended as an act of attention and politeness should convey to me the appearance of a studied insult. To Mr. R's eloquence I am no stranger.

Your affectionate uncle

J. RITSON.

---

### CXIII.

TO MR. HARRISON.

DEAR SIR,

Grays Inn, 19th June, 1793.

Mr. Hoars return affords me an opportunity which I have been long looking for of sending you what I flatter myself you will find a curious and pleasing book. I dare not buy many such articles at a venture ; but if you will give me your commission for any thing, I will do my endeavour to procure it. What can I say more ?

Your conjecture of *fur-lined* for *fair-lined* in Marlowes song is equally just and happy, and shall certainly be adopted in the next edition. But all the copies, I observe, have the same error.

I cannot learn that any German grammar has

been published or sold here of late years besides Dr. Wendeborns. Kearsley, to whom you refer me, as the publisher of Peter Pindars pieces, never had any thing of the kind.

As you allowed me to suit my convenience with regard to the payment of your draught, I shall take the liberty to defer it till I leave town, having turned stock-jobber and disabled myself by buying into the funds. I shall be a loser of ten pounds by this business ; so that you must never say I bargain *like a tradesman*.

Perhaps in the course of a few weeks I shall have arranged my plan for the vacation : in the course of which if you do not see, you shall certainly hear, from me. Meanwhile I remain,

Dear Sir,

Very sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

---

## CXIV.

TO MR. LAING.

CITIZEN, MY FRIEND,    Grays Inn, July 30, 1793.

I have so long neglected or deferred writing in return for your favour of the fifteenth of March

(which has ever since its receipt, in very good company I assure you, lain open for the purpose on my table) that I am almost ashamed at this distant period to take up my pen. However, as the saying is, "better late than never," and therefore, first and foremost, I wish you joy of your new apartments, in which, I presume, you are by this time comfortably settled; and where, I am sorry to add, it will not be in my power to pay you a visit this season, as I some time ago intended. I return you the same thanks, nevertheless, for your promised hospitality and good cheer, as if I had actually partaken of them, so that you both insure my gratitude and save your money. And so at last, it seems,

———— Cumyng\* is in his grave;  
After lifes fitful fever, he sleeps well;  
'Domestic strife, nor wants imperious,'—nothing  
Can touch him further. 'Tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd.

*Apropos*,—What became of his "Sibbald's Works," which you say you would endeavour to procure for me? In fact, my good friend, I find I am to place little confidence in a profession like yours; for, if you were not pledged to offer me

\* Mr. James Cumyng, Keeper of the Lyon Records, and Secretary to the Society of Antiquaries, Edinburgh.

the refusal of "Bellendynes History," there is no faith in man!

I wish very much to know too, what is become of my King Charles's spurs, &c. which I sent to master Cumyng for your Antiquarian society; as I am apprehensive they have been knocked off with the rest of his old iron. Do be so good as give yourself the trouble to enquire into this matter; and tell me who is Jemmys successor in the secretaryship of the society.

As to the tracts I mentioned, I find the making of transcripts so much more fatiguing than it used to be, that I am afraid I must decline the task of preparation. I suppose, if you were to see me this summer, you would observe to some of our tripe friends, that I too am "much fallen off" since you last saw me. In fine, as the great Rousseau says, "I perceive myself approaching the eve of old age, and hastening on to death without having lived."

*Allons, mon ami.* My "Scotish Songs" have been very much neglected; but I hope to get them ready for publication by Christmas. I shall press Stothard hard this week to decide the fate of Mr. Allans designs, and either you or he shall soon know what use we make of them. But it is a fact, that many engravers will not undertake a

drawing which they have to reduce. I spoke to Dilly about putting your name in the title. He says, if you subscribe for fifty copies it may be done ; otherwise, it will not be worth while to send any down.

I wonder much I have never heard a syllable from any quarter about the old volume of Tracts which Mr. Tytler was so obliging as to promise should be returned to the Library. Mr. Brown has possibly forgotten my wants ; will you therefore, be so good as enquire if it be yet come in ? I wish a copy of the six *first lines* of *Robin Hood*, which, I understand, is the last tract *near* the volume. This little extract will enable me to determine whether a copy will be necessary of the whole.

When you see Mr. Paton (to whose curious library, Mr. Chalmers tells me, you have at length gained admittance) please to ask if he has received a parcel from me through the hands of his friend Robertson *vid* Kircaldie, which I made up, I believe, so long ago as February. You see how easy it is to fill a sheet of paper with nothing at all.

Yours, &c.

J. RITSON.

---

## CXV.

TO THE EDITOR.

Grays Inn, 9th August, 1793.

CITIZEN, MY NEPHEW,

I agree with Rowntree and Clarke that the offer made you by citizen Wolley, is every thing you could wish or hope for, and such as you ought not to hesitate a moment in accepting. What will happen in the course of five years it is impossible to foresee ; but the question is what is best for you to do at present. Wolleys reflection on your proposal of drawing under the bar is certainly just : " I have experience of it myself : " and can assure you that if it had not been for that little dirty place in the Savoy, I should most probably at this moment have been either in a jail, an attorneys office, or stationers shop ; and it would be hard to say which of those situations is the worst. Five years are nothing in competition with the prospect you will have of establishing yourself in a useful and lucrative business at the end of the term : whereas you might be drudging whether under or above the bar for ten times as long, without a hope of ever being worth a far-

thing. Besides, as Wolley observes, you would be a slave to the attorneys, WHOM I HAVE FOUND NOT ONLY THE MOST IGNORANT AND CAPRICIOUS, BUT THE MOST INSINCERE, UNPRINCIPLED, AND IN EVERY RESPECT, WORTHLESS OF MEN. In a word you had much better hang yourself at once than begin to draw under the bar. If you do not immediately accept Wolleys offer you may resign yourself to everlasting damnation, as there will not be a chance left of your doing well.

Who seeks, and will not take when once 'tis offer'd,  
Shall never find it more.

With respect to a revolution, though I think it at no great distance, it seems to defy all calculation for the present. If the increase of taxes, the decline of manufactures, the high price of provisions, and the like, have no effect upon the apathy of the sans culottes here, one can expect little from the reasoning of philosophers or politicians. When the pot boils violently, however, it is not always in the cooks power to prevent the fat from falling into the fire. But suppose a revolution do happen, how is it to provide for you? People will have to work for their bread, I presume, pretty much as they do at present; for a long series of years at least; and he who has nothing will be in equal danger of starving. In fact the

idea of an approaching change should influence you the rather to fix yourself in a business or situation which would enable you to take advantage of it when it did come: and I do not see but an attorney is as likely to make his way in case of a revolution as any other member of the profession.

I called some days since at the White Bear, but was informed that citizen Bruin\* was out of town. Taking a walk however on Sunday evening to Bagnigge Wells I saw him entering one of the rooms, disguised, like a gentleman, in a new white coat and an umbrella in his hand, which made me the less forward to accost him, as I presume he is no longer "the individual John" than he wears a blue coat with a red cape. Indeed, I am so disgusted with his bigotted prejudices and absurd opinions, that the continuation of our acquaintance will be owing rather to ceremony than to esteem, on the part at least of

Your affectionate uncle  
and fellow democrat

J. RITSON.

\* Commonly called the "Walking Stewart."—Ed.



## CXVI.

## TO THE SAME.

Grays Inn, 21st August, 1793.

CITIZEN NEPHEW,

The ingenious expedient by which you intend to save *two* years is perfectly well calculated to lose *five*. In a word, your time would be thrown away, and yourself (most probably) put in the pillory. Nothing will do short of *actual service* for five complete years *under articles*.

I rather wonder you should puff off your copy of the *Système* as so infinitely superior to mine, which I beg, when you come to London again, you would be pleased to put in your pocket; as I by no means think myself benefitted by the exchange. The binding may be Flemish or Spanish or Dutch, or any thing in short but French, as you are certainly a monstrous fool to suppose, since it does not resemble French binding in any respect whatever.

I am obliged to you for Wilsons catalogue, but cannot find a single book in it worth writing for.

I remain,

Your affectionate uncle

and fellow citizen,

J. RITSON.

## CXVII.

TO MR. HARRISON.

MY GOOD FRIEND,    Grays Inn, 14th Sept. 1793.

It is determined by the fates that I shall not have the satisfaction of seeing you this year, or perhaps in any future one: but, as they say, while there's life there's hope.

I am much obliged by the pains you have taken in detecting the blunders of the *English Anthology*. Some of them, however, are those of the author himself, or of the authority, at least, whence the piece is taken, and for these, of course, neither editor nor printer seems responsible: as to the rest one or other of us must plead guilty. But all shall be remedied in the next edition, if we live to see it.

The value of Horsleys *Britannia Romana* depends much upon the condition, which is not improved by the plates and castrations being bound separate. An unexceptionable copy is worth three guineas or three guineas and a half.

I am afraid I made a mistake in paying the 45*l.* into the account of the Durham bank, in-

stead of Mr. Chipchase's separate account. But, if you have got the money, the mistake is of no consequence.

Bowles's *Don Quixote* is an edition of no value, though the notes and indexes render it of some little use, particularly to those who wish to consult it occasionally. I have lately got the Madrid 4to. price five guineas, but I never look into it.

You will have perceived, I suppose, by your Magazine, that Herbert Croft has been obliged to relinquish the publication of his grand dictionary for want of subscribers. He is chiefly indebted, I believe, to the absurdity of his plan, which, by retaining all the blunders of Johnson and adding his own refutations, &c. doubled the bulk and price of the work. Besides, his printed specimen afforded no very promising idea of his etymological abilities ; and in fact some of his late letters in the newspapers seem to imply a derangement of intellect.

I allow that the English both may and do derive words immediately from the Greek and Latin, without passing through a French medium. But I say also that the words so derived are comparatively few in number, and chiefly technical terms and of late introduction. It is not the learned, but the ignorant, not writers, but speakers, who

form a language : how then was the Greek or Latin to be immediately communicated to our ancestors ? Three-fourths, at least, of the English language is entirely Saxon and French, chiefly the latter ; and this not the French which is now spoken or written, but the vulgar dialects of Picardie and Gascony of which unfortunately there are no dictionaries that I can hear of : neither is there any very copious glossary of the old French, which would be a great assistant to the etymologist. I had actually begun and made some little progress in an orthographico-etymological dictionary, which I intended to have sent you when finished, but I have not vigour of mind to go on with it.

I should like to have the Prussian grenadier, though I question I shall ever be able to make any thing of him. Apropos, Egerton has lately imported a large quantity of modern German poetry ; if you wish to have any of it at a venture, say.

You misstate the proverb ; it runs thus :

*Weel and woman cannot pan,*

*But woe and woman can.*

Adieu, for the present, and believe me

Very sincerely yours

J. RITSON.

## CXVIII.

## TO THE SAME.

CITIZEN, MY FRIEND,

As I know not when I may have an opportunity of sending you the books you now receive, I shall tie up the parcel, in order to have it ready at a moments warning. I hope you will find a great deal both of good language and good sense ; the author being highly spoken of, and his work translated into French, English, and perhaps Italian. I cannot meet with Trenck, whom I think you would like still better. Poor fellow, he is likely to end his days in a prison, let him reside in whatever country he will.

The words *haberdasher* and *beshrew* still baffle all my etymological researches. The former is used by Chaucer, so that I entirely abandon the cry of Frankfort Fair : *Hebt u das herr !* and to suppose that the latter originates in the bite of a mouse seems the *ne plus ultra* of absurdity. Try what you can make of them.

Wintons chronicle, I understand, is to be published early this winter. The editor is Mr. Macpherson, (not the Highland impostor) ; and I am assured that the utmost accuracy and integrity is

to be manifested on the occasion : either of which, you know, is pretty extraordinary in a Scotchman. Indeed, I am apt to suspect the publishers abilities rather than his honesty : but he has got a very masterly assistant. I know not whether you care three farthings for either Winton or his chronicle, but, as no more than 250 copies are to be printed, the work will undoubtedly become very scarce. Adieu. Sic subscribitur,

J. RITSON.

From my chamber in Grays Inn,  
7th October, 2d year of the French  
republic (not being yet perfect in  
the new name of the month).

---

## CXIX.

TO MR. WALKER.

DEAR SIR,

Grays Inn, 21st Nov. 1793.

The little tract you have given me the pleasure of reading does equal honour to your benevolence and ingenuity. I hope your patriotic exertions, of which this is by no means the first, will be productive in time of the success they merit ; but am afraid that the vices of government, which

"infect to the north star," are inimical, at present, to every species of reformation. Apropos, what is the meaning of Eubante? I am so poor a linguist as to be entirely ignorant of what no other mortal, perhaps, could be at a loss for.

I have communicated your account of Mr. Eccles to Mr. Steevens and Dr. Farmer; and rather wonder that the former should not have been better acquainted with him. I am much obliged by your polite offer to procure me a copy of this gentlemans Shakspeare, which is not, that I can find, to be had here. There is no mention made of Malones proposed edition, though I believe Heath is going on with the plates; and whether it be the poetical or the prose works of Dryden that he means to publish I really cannot tell.

Want of curiosity, I imagine, prevents me from reading what has been written either by Dr. Stack on the character of Falstaff, or by the other gentleman you mention on the Tempest. As no one, I am persuaded, beside Dr. Stack, ever conceived that Mr. Morgan was serious in his vindication of Falstaffs courage, an elaborate refutation of a mere joke must appear somewhat extraordinary.

There are many gentlemen in this country possessed of portraits in which they are perspicacious

enough to discover the features of our great poet, and see "Helens beauty in a brow of Egypt ;" but few, I believe, are so complaisant as to take a goose for a swan beside the owner. Mr. Steevens, no doubt, is always ingenious, and, at least, plausible ; but I cannot say that his arguments against the existence of Shakspeares portrait, even in the ghostly canvas of the Chandos family, are in every respect satisfactory and conclusive. That the public has been hitherto imposed upon with sham and dissimilar likenesses (if you will allow of an English bull) from the same painting by Vertue, Reed, and Malóne, is no sufficient proof that it does not or did not once contain a likeness in itself. Tonson, the bookseller, as early at least as the year 1700, exhibited Shakspeares head for his sign ; which shews that either the above or some other picture of him was esteemed genuine at that time, as he clearly did not follow the bust at Stratford or the print in the two first folios.

I should have expected to hear of an attack being made upon me at Constantinople as soon as at Dublin. They, I am aware, who play at bowls must expect rubbers ; but I shall never be sorry to have my enemy at a distance.

You will shortly, I promise myself, receive a



much longer epistle (if length be any recommendation) through the hands of Mr. Archer.

Mr. Cromwell, whose absence from town has delayed my letter for several weeks, though surely returned by this time, has not thought proper to answer the note in which I communicated your enquiry.

I confounded Mr. Hayleys residence, I find, with a totally different place. You will have already learned, I suppose, that it is "Eartham, near Chichester."

I am, dear Sir,

Your much obliged and sincere friend,

J. RITSON.

---

## CXX.

TO THE EDITOR.

Grays Inn, 29th November, 1793.

DEAR NEPHEW,

I congratulate you upon a situation which enables you to see so much of the world. An excursion among the wild Irish cannot fail, I should think, to polish your manners and improve your understanding. I have no commission to trouble you with, nor do I know any thing in Dublin worth seeing.

I received no gazettes by your friend R. nor, indeed, as I conclude they are after the Austrians retook possession of Brussels, am I very anxious about them. I confess the shilling, for which I have given you credit.

Citizen Godwin has been here twice, but I have not seen him since the receipt of your letter. I have likewise had repeated visits from citizen Holcroft, who assures me that your information respecting his collection of atheists was unfounded. I suppose, however, the late proceedings in France will make that animal less rare.

The attorney general has prepared no less than three indictments against Eaton for his "Hogs wash," and a fourth against poor Spence for his "Pigs meat:" so that these two worthy swineherds seem to have brought their hogs to a fine market. I have not yet seen the latter, but Eatons daughter informs me that he has long made up his mind for another imprisonment, and has accordingly taken a shop in Newgate-street, that he may have his family near him, and that the great cause, which he appears to have much at heart, may not be neglected in his confinement. We have not been hitherto able to do any thing for our friend Rickman, who sent me the other day one of citizen Paines pens, with some pretty occasional

verses, which you may probably like to see. Les  
voila.

## IMPROMPTU.

To Citizen J. Ritson.

With heartfelt joy to you I send,  
This precious relic of my friend.  
With *this*, our *Paine* those pages wrote,  
Which all the good with rapture quote ;  
And which, ere long, from Pole to Pole,  
Shall *purge* and *renovate* the whole ;  
Shall monarchy, man's *greatest* curse,  
And all its satellites disperse,  
And make the human race exclaim,  
We owe our happiness to Paine !

Nov. 22d, 1793.

CLIO.

I sincerely wish you health and happiness, and  
am, Your affectionate uncle  
J. RITSON.

## CXXI.

To MR. LAING.

DEAR SIR,

Grays Inn, 19th Jan. 1794.

A Scotchman in a passion must necessarily be  
a very ferocious and dangerous animal : it is,

therefore, very well for me to have been at so great a distance when the fit came on ; otherwise, perhaps, instead of an angry letter, I should have received your dirk in my wem. Egertons advice, no doubt, was meant to be confined to English Booksellers, as he must be thoroughly sensible, if it were only from his dealings with you, of the immaculacy of his Scottish brethren. I did not mention the three shillings and sixpence, either with a view to have it deducted, or because I thought it unreasonable : I only wished it could have been avoided. " Only three shillings !" You seem to forget that three shillings sterling is near two pounds Scots, and that there has been a time when the mighty and puissant Monarch of all Scotland had not such a sum in his Treasury. The case is altered, I perceive, at present ; but whom have you to thank for it ?

" Bonny Scot we all witness can  
That England hath made thee a gentleman."

Your narrative of the dying moments and last advice of poor Cumyng is really so ludicrous and so lamentable, that one does not know whether to laugh or cry. I hope you will take care that a piece of eloquence so interesting and important to society does not perish with its author. Suppose you were to draw it up as a communication for

the next volume of "Transactions of the Antiquaries of Scotland," under the title of "Cumyngs Legacy, or a Dissertation upon ——." If you should happen to be at a loss from want of an acquaintance with the subject, Master Smellie will doubtless be ready to lend you any assistance in order to do honour to the memory of his departed friend. Or, perhaps, as you have it in contemplation to favour the public with some biographical anecdotes of the author, which I dare say will be much more entertaining, and just as important, as Boswells Life of Johnson, you might with great propriety enhance the value of the work by so curious an appendix. I am, however, really sorry to lose so worthy and respectable an acquaintance, whom I hoped to render a valuable correspondent. *Apropos.* Are my ancient spurs, &c. deposited in the archives of the Society? I have no great expectation from his library; though, I suppose, the heraldical books may make it an object.

I delivered your message to Egerton; but you must not think that I make his shop as common a lounging-place as I did yours. I sometimes do not get there for a month together.

Egertons sold their Bellenden to Mr. Chalmers for three guineas and a half; but they told me it

was a very fine and entirely perfect copy,—circumstances, to be sure, which make a great difference in the value of such books.

I wish I could prevail upon you to publish a volume of Scottish Historical Tracts, something like that I got of you containing "Monros Account of the Isles, &c." you might not indeed get much by it ; but I think you could lose nothing, and the publication would be useful and respectable. I could supply a thing or two, either from my own collection, or from MSS. in the Museum; and would particularly recommend to you a translation of "Sir Robert Gordons Account of Scotland" from Bleaus Atlas, which has never appeared. Let me have your sentiments upon this project ; and tell me also how or whether you go on with the Catalogue I had the honour of setting on foot. I remain,

Very sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

P. S. You complain, I see, that I have too much acidity in my composition ; and, I think, you have too much puritanism. St. Matthew, vii. 5.

---

## CXXII.

## TO THE EDITOR.

DEAR NEPHEW,    Grays Inn, 30th January, 1794.

If you wish to avoid disappointment you will never expect from me either a long letter or any letter at all. I am in arrear to every body, and have neither ability nor inclination to discharge my debts.

I send you a beautiful edition and copy of Rousseaus *Inégalité des hommes*. The excellent author looks down upon me ; on the other side of the fire-place hangs the sarcastic Voltaire ; while the enlightened and enlightening Thomas fronts the door : which is probably the reason, by the way, that scarce anybody has entered it since he made his appearance.

It is certainly to be wished that the improper substitution of *you* for *thou* had never taken place : but being so long and universally established, the change would, in my opinion, be rather injurious than beneficial ; since equality has nothing to gain, and whatever has been hitherto written in the language a great deal to lose. At any rate it

cannot be effected by a few individuals ; you must wait for a decree of the national convention. Besides, it seems altogether out of character for persons who wear powder and pigtails to give themselves the airs of a *sans culotte* in matters of much greater indifference.

After all, I would recommend it to you, as a friend, to lay your politics and philosophy upon the shelf, for a few years at least ; their temporary absence will do you no harm, and their perpetual presence can do you no good. Your first and principal (if not sole) object should be, by a sedulous and unremitting attention to business, to do justice to your employers and acquire the means of an honest independency. Whatever change may take place you must have better pretensions, I presume, to intitle yourself to its advantages than a set of political and religious opinions ; unless you think it sufficient to emulate the *bons citoyens* who make it their business, in rags and tatters, to discuss questions in the *Jardin de la révolution*, for the good of their country. You ought to be sensible at once of the obligations you are under to Mr. Wolley, of the badness of your memory, and of the dangerous consequences which that lamentable defect is perpetually threatening both to him and to yourself ; and this consideration should



induce you by a close and confined application to overcome, or at least diminish, a natural disadvantage. Like a skilful husbandman you must force the soil which nature has left sterile ; and depend upon it the produce will be answerable to the cultivation. I know by fatal experience how necessary this sort of advice was to myself at your age ; but the misfortune is that I had neither friend nor relation to give it me. I am

Your affectionate uncle

J. RITSON.

---

### CXXIII.

TO MR. WADESON.

No, my good friend, I am neither so necessitous nor so unreasonable as to take money out of your hands before it comes into them. If, indeed, you can depend upon the receipt of James Davisons rent at Mayday, and have it in your power to give me a bill upon any person here for fifteen pounds at two or three months date, it will be a service to me and no injury to yourself. If not, I shall be content to wait till the cash comes in ; when your account up to the time will be a great satisfaction : for short reckonings, they say, make long friends.

I have no political services to require of you. The great change which I hope and believe is about to take place demands neither your assistance nor mine; though, I have no doubt that both of us will participate in the common benefit. You are still partial, you say, to the pleasure of reckoning on what you have as your own, and being old-fashionably happy. It is a pleasure and a happiness that every one who knows you will wish you long, very long, to enjoy. But what danger either can be in from any event that I, at least, have in contemplation I really do not comprehend. No reformer, Painite, or whatever you please to call us, proposes to put himself in a worse condition than he is in at present: and every one has something of his own, such as it is—I myself have a little. You may therefore be assured that the most violent revolutionist is as little anxious as yourself for any change that would put in jeopardy the well earned fruits of your honest industry. If, indeed, you were a sinecure placeman or pimping pensioner of ten or twenty thousand a year you might I confess have some little reason to fear. But as it is, I can perceive that you have a good deal to gain and nothing at all to lose. For my part, though I do not clearly see what I shall get by a revolution,

I possess a place which brings me in from fifty to one hundred a year, and that I shall be certain to lose. The most prominent feature in the new system is the abolition of taxes ; and, since you are an expert arithmetician, and able calculator, I shall be glad to learn the specific injury you will sustain by that. No, no ; depend upon it, my friend, that your ideas on this subject are a little erroneous : and, if you think truth preferable to falsehood and right to wrong, I would recommend you to enlighten your mind by an attentive perusal of the " Rights of man," and Godwins " Enquiry concerning Political Justice," both which, I presume, you may procure if you have an inclination. At any rate, when the row begins, I should think it a point of prudence to remain a temperate spectator, till, at least, the contest is fairly decided : which is all at present from,

Your sincere friend,

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 26th Feb. 1794.

## CXXIV.

To MR. PATON.

DEAR SIR,

Grays Inn, 5th March, 1794.

I have been extremely mortified to learn that the parcel which I delivered, directed for you, to George Robertson, in the beginning of last year, and which he professes to have sent by a person belonging to Kirkaldie, has entirely miscarried. It contained the supplements to your defective copy of Sir David Lindsays Satyre, and some other papers, I believe, of less moment. I could have found other means of conveyance, but concluded, from the circumstance of your friendship with Mr. Robertson, that I could not consult either expedition or security better than by entrusting it to him. I have called repeatedly at his shop to learn the name of the man, but am never able to find him at home. We must therefore I fear give the parcel up for lost.

Though, as I am persuaded I have already told you, I do not much admire Lord Hailes's judgment in the selection he made from your Godly ballads, I am not the less obliged to you for the copy I received, and which has sufficient merit as

coming from a gentleman of whose friendship and favour I shall be always very proud.

I shall beg your acceptance shortly of a small collection of Scottish Songs, with which I have certainly taken some pains, though I cannot boast that the result is altogether successful or satisfactory. You will perceive, however, by a note at the end of the work, that I have been fortunate enough to ascertain the exact date of Sir D. Lindsay's Satyre, which appears to have been originally represented before the king and queen at Linlithgow on the 6th of January 1539. Any corrections, improvements or observations will be duly regarded.

The impression of another little volume, of which I believe I shewed you a fragment, entitled "The Caledonian Muse," which had engaged my attention for a great many years, and was at last got nearly ready for publication, has been lately destroyed by a fire in the printers house ; so that I neither possess, nor can procure, one single complete copy. Sic transit gloria mundi !

You will have heard, I presume, that Wintons Chronicle, by a Mr. Macpherson, is in great forwardness. It is to surpass, in point of correctness and typography, any thing that has hitherto appeared. But, I confess, the specimen I have

seen betrayed symptoms of licentiousness and affectation which I can neither approve of nor account for.

Pinkerton seems busy in his intended history of Scotland; whether it is to be the same with that advertised under the name of Robert Heron, I cannot learn. His treatment of the "Celtic savages" is to be speedily resented in print by the Reverend John Lane Buchanan, nominal author of "Travels in the Western Hebrides," who seems in fact, to be as very a Celt as his antagonist could possibly wish for. I am sorry to find so good a cause in the hands of such an incompetent advocate.

I indulge myself at present with the hopes of seeing you in the course of the ensuing summer, and, in the meanwhile, request you to believe me,

Dear Sir

Your sincere friend and faithful  
obedient servant

J. RITSON.

---

## CXXV.

TO MR. LAING.

MY FRIEND,

Grays Inn, March 5, 1794.

I dare not call you Citizen, lest, when I revisit your metropolis, your scoundrel judges should send me for fourteen years to Botany Bay ; only I am in good hopes, before that event takes place, they will be all sent to the devil.

In a short time you will receive fifty copies of my " Scottish Songs ;" twelve you take yourself ; five you will present, with the Editors compliments, to Mr. Fraser Tytler, Mr. Allan, Mr. Brown, Mr. Paton and Mr. Campbell—that is one to each ; the rest you will sell on my account, if you can. The expence of advertising once or twice in the Edinburgh papers I must of course be debited with. You will scarcely believe that the publication of these two small and unfortunately unequal volumes stands me in three hundred pounds. I make up my mind of course, to a considerable loss ; which I begrudge the less as it is incurred for the honour of Scotland. I shall be glad to have all Lord Hailes's 4to. pamphlets, beside those

you sent me, or as many of them as you can procure.

I should think the greatest help for your intended Catalogue would be the copies or stock books of the different booksellers. You might doubtless have the inspection of the Edinburgh Gazette at the Library ; but, in fact, I should give myself little concern about books printed before the commencement of the Scots Magazine. Besides Rome was not built in a day, nor is perfection to be looked for even in the labours of Laing.

The impression of my " Caledonian Muse," which had engaged the attention of so many years, and was just ready for publication, has been lately destroyed by a fire which broke out in the printers house ;\* so that I have not, nor can I procure a single copy. I am of course meditating a trip to Scotland, to re-collect materials for a new edition.

I remain, in the interim,

Yours sincerely

J. RITSON.

\* The printing-office of Mr. Archibald Hamilton, Falcon Court, Fleet Street.



## CXXVI.

TO MR. WALKER.

DEAR SIR,                      Grays Inn, 8th March, 1794.

I hope that by this time every relique of your late alarming visitation is eradicated, and your health completely re-established. The fever, I am persuaded, only threatened you in jest, as a life so precious to the gods, because so useful to men, can be in no real danger for at least a century to come. Besides, if you read Godwin on political justice (of which, I see, an edition has lately appeared in Dublin) you will be easily convinced that sickness and death proceed merely from a want of resolution ; and, of consequence, that it is entirely in ones own power to be healthy and immortal! You may therefore securely exclaim with Macbeth :

“ Throw physic to the dogs, I'll none of it.”

The MS. shall be immediately sent to Mr. Marsden. Novel-writing is certainly in high estimation. Mrs. Radcliffe, author of “ The Romance of the Forest,” has one at present in the hands of Robinsons for which she asks five hundred pounds,

though it is but to consist of four volumes. Godwin also, and I believe, Holcroft, have each one in the press. In short, one would suppose all the world to be novel readers, though, for my part, I must with shame confess I never look into one.

As you say that Mr. Eccles's Shakspeare has been sent hither, I beg you to give yourself no further trouble about a copy for me.

The word *Phuca* or *Puca* in Irish, I presume, will only prove itself an adoption from the English : nor can you think it necessary for the illustrators of Shakspeare to have recourse to the north of Ireland for words which are sufficiently common in many parts of his native country. I cannot say I have the pleasure to agree with you that the knowledge of our favourite author was not confined to the English language. I shall not, indeed, think it necessary to regard what either Johnson or any one else may be pleased either to acknowledge or deny : nor will you, I imagine, think it a sufficient instance of Shakspeares being conversant with either Latin or French, that he had been at the school of sir Hugh Evans and proceeded in the accidence as far as *hig, hag, hog* ; or actually knew the meaning of *pourquoi*. Dr. Farmer, I have all along supposed, has given a decisive blow to the advocates on your side of the question : and

in addition to what he has said, I believe it would not be difficult to prove that the plays in which those two or three scraps of Latin exist, which he may not have satisfactorily accounted for, or got rid of, were not originally written by Shakspeare. As to his acquaintance with Italian, beyond his obligations to John Florio, or some one of the same stamp, I know nothing. There is a person here, a Mr. Noel, I believe more usually called Dog Jennings, who pretends he is able to prove that Shakspeare had read Ariosto and all or most of the other old Italian poets by a thousand instances. When he produces one I shall be better able to tell you what I think of him. It is added, however, that the great Malone durst not engage in the contest, though publicly challenged: you will not, however, believe that I conclude a cause to be desperate, merely because it is abandoned by Mr. M. But I exhaust your patience, and shall therefore subscribe myself,

Dear, Sir,

Your affectionate friend

J. RITSON.

P. S. I shall be glad to know if Mr. Boyd were born in Scotland.

## CXXVII.

TO MR. WADESON.

DEAR WADESON,      Grays Inn, 28th April, 1794.

I have taken the liberty to draw upon you, in favour of your neighbour Christopher, for fifteen pounds at three weeks from the 1st of May, which I flatter myself the good health of my tenants, their daughters, wives, and wives relations, added to your own friendly exertions, will enable you to honour. Apropos; you are a very good sort of man to be sure, but why the devil will you not let me have my account?

Yours sincerely,

J. RITSON.

P. S. You ought certainly to have taken some notice of my last letter. I admire your integrity, much more than your manners.

## CXXVIII.

TO MR. ROWNTREE.

DEAR ROWNTREE,      Grays Inn, 26th June, 1794.

As I persuade myself I shall be able to pay off the hundred pounds and interest due to you on my

hard bargain in Finkle Street by Michaelmas, I shall be glad to know whether you are willing to take it at that time ; and if so, that you would send up your security, with a proper discharge and surrender of the term indorsed (to which there is no occasion for a stamp) to be delivered to me by your banker or agent on payment of the money. The interest from the 4th of Dec. 1792, to (say) the 4th of Oct. 1794, will, according to my calculation, be seven pounds, six shillings and eight pence. But it will be necessary for you to deduct the dozen of wine left in your cellar, for which you give me no credit in our last account though I dare say you know the exact quantity to a glass.

Yours sincerely

J. RITSON.

---

## CXXIX.

TO MR. HARRISON.

CITIZEN,

As Wear does not go the circuit, i cannot tel when or by whom you wil receive the parcel i have to send, which wil be too large for any but a familiar acquaintance. It seems best, however, to have it ready.

In the first place, i return your MS. of Captain Hodgsons memoirs, which i have carefully transcribed, but dare not yet venture to put to the press, being already in advance, one way or another, above five hundred pounds ; a good part of which, i begin to fear, will never find its way back.

Secondly. You have a list of German books, from Paynes last catalogue, any of which, i fancy, you may still procure on communicateing your wishes to your humble servant.

Thirdly. I inclose the catalogue of your friend Jackson the quakeers library. Perhaps you have already heard that the owner cut his throat in the wine-cellar, where he was accustomed to retire after the family had gone to bed : and there, as one of his servants observeed, was his "dear head found lyeing among the hogsheads." You see the various ways there are of creeping out of the world.

Lastly, you receive the two volumes of my "Scotish songs," and the second and third of the "Engleish anthology ;" which i submit to your candid criticism.

I cannot say that i perfectly comprehend your scheme of the new French calendar. What is the meaning of the red lines ? But, i confess, i have never yet red the report, which wil probably explain their use.

You are the best judge of the occasion you have for a Spanish-Engleish dictionary. I suppose you might get one to answer your purpose (Delpinos, for instance) for eight or ten shillings. Shal i look out for it?

---

Wear haveing changed his mind, you wil most probably be indebted to him for the receipt of my parcel. As for my own part, i do not know nor even think that i shal ever be in the north again.

I have not that alacrity of spirit,

Nor cheer of mind, that i was wont to have.

Did you ever take notice of the number of words which are precisely the same in French and Saxon? It is a circumstance i was not a little surpriseed at, and proves incontestably, in my opinion, that the old Franks were either the same or a similar people with the Anglo-Saxons. The difficulty, in this case, is to determine from which of the two languagees the Engleish has borrowed the word. For though i think the inclination is, generally speaking, sufficiently strong in favour of the Saxon, i could produce instancees where the Saxon word appears to have been droped and forgotten, and the French one, perhaps long afterward, adopted in its place. So that i believe it wil on many occasions be found impossible to decide be-

tween the rival claimants. As to the German, Dutch, Swedish, &c. i am convinceed there are not in the Engleish language above half a dozen words immediately deriveed from all together. We have introduced a good many, i perceive, from the Italian, and some few from the Spanish ; but the main sourcees are Saxon, French, and Latin ; and had we proper dictionaries in those languagees the etymologist would be very seldom at a loss. I have reason to suspect that Lye has not above half the Saxon words which are stil to be found in Mss. nor, had he got them all, would they amount to more than a third of the language as spokeen here before the conquest. The French, i believe, have some dictionaries of their old language, or rather of their obsolete words, which i have not yet been able to meet with : but i am most anxious to find one of the *Picardois*, to which the Engleish seems most indebted. Health and fraternity.

Grays Inn, 21st Thermidor.  
2d year of the F. Republic.

J. RITSON.

---

### CXXX.

#### TO THE EDITOR.

My aversion to letter-writing increases every day. I have had the pen in my hand, for the



purpose of writing to you, at least a dozen times, and have still laid it down again without beginning a word, I take it up at present, however, with prodigious resolution. As I have heard nothing either of your execution or imprisonment (neither of which, by the way, would have much surprised me) I take it for granted you enjoy life and liberty, very precarious enjoyments, let me tell you, in these ticklish times. For my own part, the storm seems to have blown over me, and I suppose myself out of danger ; but whether I am to thank prudence or fortune, I cannot exactly determine. The judges commissioned for trial of the patriots in the Tower are expected to sit on the 2d of October, and to adjourn (if bills be found) to the 16th, when the trials will commence. Great expectations are formed of the eloquence and magnanimity of Horne Tooke, and we have no doubt but he will acquit himself in every sense, to the confusion of his persecutors. Not a place, it is said, will be procurable under a guinea, but I mean, at present, to slip on my wig and gown,—being my first appearance on that stage. Did you ask (for I don't exactly know what I have done with your letter) whether Godwins book was about to appear in 8vo. ? I can only tell you that he is preparing for such an edition, but I do not

think it likely to be published these twelve months. I suppose he will give me timely notice, as I myself have the 4to edition—though it cost me, by the by, no more than 18s.—You have read his novel, I presume ; he has got it sufficiently puffed in the *Critical Review*, but, between ourselves, it is a very indifferent, or rather despicable performance,—at all events unworthy of the author of *Political justice* : I have no patience with it.—Looking over the *State Trials*, a few days ago, I met (in the mouth of an Irish bishop) with the expression of—“ the *Chancery* side of the *Exchequer* :” so that, you see, you are not the first fool in the world. Every one, I believe, whether fool or knave, feels a sort of satisfaction in finding others as bad as himself. Apropos, have you ever visited Henry Yorke ? and (if so) what do you think of him ?—I desire, if you ever write to me again, you may not do it under a cover of that ‘ pitiful’ fellow W . . . —Health and fraternity.

J. RITSON.

Grays-Inn, 5th Vendemaire, 3.

---

## CXXXI.

To MR. ROWNTREE.

Grays Inn, 14th October, 1794.

DEAR ROWNTREE,

Some unforeseen circumstances have utterly disqualified me from paying off your money, as, at the time I last wrote, I certainly intended to do. All that now remains, is for me to desire you, *as a professional man*, to let the house be fairly sold, as soon as possible, *for whatever it will fetch*; and, satisfying your principal and interest, to remit me the surplus. I have likewise, you know, two or three small old houses at Hartlepool, which I should be equally glad to have disposed of *for any thing that can be got*. If, for whatever reason, you do not think proper to execute this commission, be pleased to acquaint me with your refusal, that I may transfer it to some one else; which, I assure you, will be very unpleasant. I think, if you succeed in selling the house, you need not, unless you please, let your mortgage-term appear upon the abstract, or be recited in the conveyance: but this I leave to yourself.

As your recollection of the wine you had seems no better than my own, we will say no more about it ; and much good may it do you.

Yours sincerely

J. RITSON.

---

CXXXII.

TO MR. WADESON.

Grays-Inn, 29th October, 1794.

DEAR WADESON,

You do not seem to profit much by the old saying, that " a burnt child dreads the fire : " you have been thrown from your horse, and the moment you are able, you mount him again : but perhaps you conclude your neck proof against every thing but hemp. Legs and arms, however, seem to be worth taking a little care of. For my part I am determin'd never to ride any horse but a wooden one.

My impatience to get rid of the house led me to desire Rowntree to dispose of it in any way or for any price : but as Joseph Dixons offer seems a very fair one, I hope, unless he is certain of making a better bargain, he will not reject it. You

will be so good as give him a hint to this effect. I wish at all events to sell the house, and he who procures me the most money for it in the shortest time affords me the strongest proof of friendship : *Tros Tyriusve*, it matters not whether a Wadeson or a Rowntree.

The Rev. Mr. H . . . . is a scoundrel, who never was nor will be able to purchase any thing. If you can help me to a chap (for I suppose Rowntree will not trouble his head about the matter) . . . . you will everlastingly oblige,

Your sincere friend and well-wisher,

J. RITSON.

P. S. I am not poorer than I used to be, but my money, as they say, is neither here nor there. Beside, I want to put my little affairs in order that I may live, if I am to live, or at least die, in comfort. Apropos, James Davison is either very poor or very unreasonable ; at any rate he is a very bad tenant. I desire you will insist a little upon his paying up at Martinmas for your own sake : and do, my good friend, let me then have a final account with you ; for I am strongly inclined to suspect that we shall never meet again.

## CXXXIII.

## TO THE EDITOR.

That citizen Russell might not be disappointed of his draught, I have prepared and sent it as you desire. But I cannot say I am very anxious about business in this way, and must beg you not to favour me with the interposition of your good offices in future. The fee is two guineas for which I have taken credit in your account; so that you have nothing to do but put it in your pocket.

My wants being both immediate and temporary, you will have no occasion to give yourself any further trouble about the money: neither your credit nor your opportunity seems to be a bit better than my own.

You appear to have seen Holcrofts pamphlet; which certainly displays much ability and good-writing, but most of all the extreme vanity and self-importance of the author, which is equally ridiculous and disgusting. He thinks it impossible that any court or jury in the world could have resisted the force of his combined eloquence and philosophy; and actually told me that he

would gladly have given one of his hands for the opportunity of making his defence, which by the way would certainly have hanged him, however favourable his judges might have been beforehand. His letter to Wyndham; I see, is advertised for publication in this days paper.

I suppose you will find citizen Hodgsons translation of the *Système* executed in a very slovenly and inaccurate manner. The poor fellow is starving in Newgate, and I do not understand he is likely to receive much benefit by the sale of his work.

I have sold your copy of madame de Stael to Egerton for nine shillings.

There has been bloody work in Holland, but I continually flatter myself that the next mail will bring us intelligence that every inch of it is in the peaceable possession of the French; since, it is evident, we can hope for nothing but from their success, which at the same time, unless I be too sanguine, promises every thing.

I see that Lequinio, one of the Convention, has published a book intitled *Les préjugés détruits*, which I have not met with; should it fall in your way, I shall be glad to know what you think of it. The title, at least, is promising: there was an ex-

tract from it in the Courier, which I had not time to read. Health and fraternity !

Grays Inn,  
16th Jan. [1795]

J. RITSON.

---

CXXXIV.

TO MR. PATON.

DEAR SIR,                      Grays Inn, 19th January, 1795.

The receipt of your obliging favour (which the expectation of a cover prevented my immediately acknowledging) gave me great pleasure. I am sorry to have been deprived of the still greater pleasure of a personal interview, but can assure you that the circumstances which conspired to defeat my proposed visit to "the good town" did not include a want of inclination.

I shall be highly gratified with a perusal of the fragments of Scottish songs collected by Mr. Herd, which may be sent by the mail, under cover to Mr. Chalmers, to whom either yourself or Mr. Laing may possibly have other matters to communicate ; and shall be returned with equal safety, and probably by the same conveyance. I feel myself much indebted and obliged both to Mr. Herd



and yourself for this proof of your attention and liberality. My little collection, I fear, was scarcely worth your acceptance, as there can be very few things in it which you were not already acquainted with. Could I, indeed, have made it convenient to have passed a summer or two in the south of Scotland, I might perhaps have been able to render it more gratifying to curiosity.

If the duke of Roxburghs edition of the "Godly songs" bear the date of 1600, I should suppose it to be either the *first* or *second*; as I believe your own was printed in 1621. The date, indeed, is unluckily cut off; but Mr. Chalmers supplied me with the full title of a copy in the possession of Mr. Brand, a clergyman, (secretary to the society of antiquaries) which agreed in every respect with that of yours. I should certainly be glad enough to see the dukes book, but have no opportunity of gaining access to it. If I may take the liberty to refer you to my "Historical essay," (pp. xxxvii. li.) you will perceive upon what grounds I conclude the author of "The complaint of Scotlande," and the author of the "Godly songs," to be one and the same person, and also how much I am indebted to your friendship for the discovery. I am persuaded that Sir James Inglis's title to the former of those works is merely founded upon a

mistake of Dr. Mackenzie or of some person he had consulted. That lord Oxfords copy of the book (whatever is become of it) actually possessed the title, and that the authors name appeared thereby to be *Vedderburne*, seems evident from Osbornes catalogue. But I perceive, on dipping into the new edition of Ames's *History of printing*, that you have already handled this matter with your usual accuracy and research.

In the faculty library, as I learn from their printed catalogue, is some old Scottish poetry by *James Gray* of which I shall esteem it a very particular favour if you can procure me some account. I have never been able to hear any thing of the old volume of tracts, which is a severe disappointment. Mr. Fraser Tytler, who promised me to look after it, is probably dissatisfied with the manner in which I have thought myself obliged to differ from his father; but which is no other, I believe, than he himself differed from Hume and Robertson. *Magis amica veritas* was his motto, and is mine.

I am very much afraid that Mr. Chalmers undertakes so many literary adventures at once, he will never be able to achieve them either with satisfaction to his judgment or with safety to his health. I have not learned what progress he has made in

“The life of Allan Ramsay ;” but I find he is likewise engaged upon that of Thomson, as well as on the lives of all the political and commercial writers of Great Britain, and not the less occupied, at the same time, in a work of still greater magnitude and importance : a sort of *Villare Scoticum*, upon a most extensive, and, so far as I am capable of judging, most excellent plan : which will, unquestionably, prove of the greatest utility to Scottish history, of much greater indeed, than anything that has hitherto appeared : his object being to amass the utmost possible quantity of facts, verified by the best possible authorities. He has lately favoured me with your engraved portrait, upon which you may be assured I set no small value.

I shall be glad if you will inform me who was the editor of Montrose's memoirs, published in 1756. I had understood him to be the late lord Hailes, which I now fancy a mistake, as his lordships character seems to savour too much of the virulency of whiggism for an admirer of Montrose.

Our friend Pinkerton, I am told, to complete the infamy of his character, has turned critical reviewer, a situation, of course, which admits neither truth nor honesty. He will therefore have the pleasure of thundering his own damnation upon

the heads of others, among whom, I suppose, he will take care not to forget,

Dear Sir,

Your very sincere friend and  
humble servant

J. RITSON.

---

### CXXXV.

#### TO THE EDITOR.

I transmitted your letters to citizen Thelwall, whom I have not since met with : perhaps he may write to you on the subject. For my part, I abominate mendicancy of every description, and think it much more honourable in a distressed man to hang than to beg. Besides, citizen Yorke well knows, though you may not, that the London Corresponding Society is chiefly composed of poor mechanics who find it a sufficiently hard matter to support themselves and their families, setting aside several of their members who are languishing in penury, sickness and confinement, and whose wives and children are literally perishing for want. I would therefore recommend it to you to make no more applications of this sort. Citizen Yorke

is said to be a man of some property, which he has been long enough in prison to derive assistance from ; but he is also said to be a lover of money, and refused to join the Scottish Convention as a delegate from one of these societies because it either would not or could not advance him beforehand as much as he insisted on. To confess the truth, the more I see of these modern patriots and philosophers the less I like them. All of them disapproved of Gerald's having recourse to the Scottish advocates, though it was but to argue what we call a point of law ; and yet, when their own precious existence was supposed to be in danger, they were ready enough to court the means of defence which they had before so uniformly reprobated. Their constant cant is, the force and energy of mind, to which all opposition is to be ineffectual ; but none of them, I say, has ever chosen to rely upon that irresistible power in his own case. I really think that Thelwall is the best of them, and yet I find myself pretty singular in my good opinion of him. His vindication, however, let his morals be what they may, is certainly a most able and argumentative performance ; perfectly adapted to the occasion ; and would, I think, if actually delivered, have been well received and had its due effect : which is a great deal more than

I can say in favour of citizen Holcrofts, though it has much merit, no doubt, as a composition, and may be read with more advantage than it would have been heard. Let citizen Yorke, therefore, exert himself in his own defence; he can do that surely without a fee; or if he must have a solicitor and counsel, let him openly tell the court that he has not a shilling to hire them with. But by no means let him beg, or at least do not you beg for him.

Your song, which is not without merit, evinces too sanguinary a disposition. It resembles one which was read on Hardys trial ("Plant, plant the tree," &c.) and in which, if I mistake not, there are some similar ideas. I shall throw it, however, into citizen Eatons hog-tub; unless you should think that this would be literally throwing pearls before swine.

Tell me whether you want Hume alone (eight volumes), or with Smolletts continuation (thirteen); and I will endeavour to suit you. Citizen Wade has looked exceedingly ill for some weeks, and, as Dickonson tells me, is going to die. If you are buying all these books on your own account, you are very much to blame.

Be so good as give me in your next letter the form of the warrant you make out to the bailiff

of a liberty jointly with the sheriffs own bailiffs ;  
as I think those I have cannot be right.

Grays Inn,  
23d March, 1795.

J. RITSON.

---

CXXXVI.

TO MR. HARRISON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Grays Inn, 16th May, 1795.

I am very glad to hear from you and still more so to witness your reimproved penmanship. It is indeed a long time (much too long) since I did myself the pleasure to write to you : my best excuse is that I had nothing to say . . .

Delpinos Spanish dictionary was republished by Baretti, and an edition has been lately printed in 'folio,' price 1*l.* 10*s.* The old one will answer your purpose equally well, and may be had, I fancy, for a third of the price : but old books, you know, are not always to be met with when they are wanted ; and I have lately examined several catalogues in vain. You may rely on my securing the first copy I can hear of.

There is no grammar, I believe, either of the Danish or of the Swedish language in English ;

and it must be a rare accident that throws in your way one in German or French : unless you would take a voyage to Copenhagen or Stockholm. There are English dictionaries, however, for both tongues, which are sufficiently common, and not too dear.

A man, who deals chiefly in German books, has just published a catalogue, which I shall transmit you by the first opportunity, as you may possibly find something to gratify your curiosity.

The dean and chapter might probably subscribe for Wyntowns chronicle, and consequently, I presume, you may have it to read, if you have not read it already. It is a curious and valuable publication, though not I think, so perfectly unexceptionable as it might have been, if the editor had forborn certain peculiarities, which he may suppose judgment and I call caprice ; but of which, after all, I should be glad to have your opinion.

Your friend Hutchinson has finished his history in a most slovenly, disgraceful, and even swindling manner. To compel his subscribers to take what they had on a formal application uniformly rejected, I mean the account of Allerton, Howden-shires and the North-Bishopric, was certainly a rascally and sharking trick, which one would not easily have suspected in a gentleman-author.



You have occasionally observed, no doubt, what a confoundedly ignorant fellow he is : in looking over his *Excursion to the lakes, and View of Northumberland*, lately, I was perfectly astonished at the monstrous blunders I met with. In p. 294 of the latter work, (volume 1.) you will find the following passage :

“ In one of the ailes of this part of the church (Melros), is an inscription cut in a fair letter, but of what import I cannot discover :

NUNAM: KATINE

THOME: PAULI: GUTHB.

TE: S: PETR: K. ETIGIN:”

Now do not you instantly perceive how abominably this blockhead has corrupted a parcel of names which every one but such an ass must have been perfectly acquainted with : “ NINIANI : KATERINE : THOME : PAULI : CUTHBERTI : S. PETRI : KENTIGERNI.” A pretty specimen this of our historiographers antiquarian knowledge. I cannot, to my satisfaction, make out a curious old epitaph which you will meet in a most mangled state in a note to the *History of Durham*, vol. 3, p. 248, where it is said to be “ Owt of a table in the chapel of S—withein Bar-

nard's castell." You will correct me ; but thus I give it :

Cest memoration  
 Avint l'an de l'incarnation,  
 Mil deus-cens et trente troys,  
 A l'entré de l'an\* et secunde moys,  
 Tut droyt le quart jour de Fevver,  
 Donc trespassa le franc guerrer  
 Alen le seigneur de Galweyth :  
 Pries a dieu ke sa alme lui plait. Amen.

Apropos : do you understand that *Nevils cross* was erected *before* or *after* the battle ? I am sorry I have not many, many opportunities of apposing (unde *posing*) you on such subjects. Whence had we, or how made we, the word *nosegay* ? *Haberdasher* I abandon as desperate. Adieu, my worthy venerable friend, mil años viva V. M.

---

## CXXXVII.

TO MR. PATON.

DEAR SIR,                      Grays Inn, 19th May, 1795.

You will both accept yourself, and have the goodness to present to Mr. Herd, my sincerest

\* *Qy. l'une for la première.* H. Boethius has *unam* for *primam*, xii. 260.

acknowledgments for his very valuable collection of Scottish ballads, many of which are particularly curious, and such as I had never before seen or heard of. As this gentleman is peculiarly conversant with the subject, I have taken the liberty, on the other side, to submit to his perusal a list of Scottish songs which I have hitherto been unable to meet with, some of which he will probably recollect, and be able to say where they are to be found. I suppose I either possess or have seen about as many more, the merits of which appear insufficient to rescue them from oblivion. But, all together, the number is prodigious ! From the falsehood, impudence and scurrility of *The Critical Review*, I conclude that Pinkerton is one of its principal authors, and particularly *the gentleman* to whom I and my little publication are so much obliged. You will think me too revengeful when I wish he were compelled to subscribe his name to his criticisms. The Shakespeare papers, of which you have heard so much, and which I have carefully examined, are, I can assure you, a parcel of forgeries, studiously and ably calculated to deceive the public : the imposition being, in point of art and foresight, beyond any thing of the kind that has been witnessed since the days of *Annius Viterbiensis* : So that we

may soon hope to match you in the number of literary impostors.

I am, dear sir, very sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

P. S. I have at last recovered the tune to which *The banks of Helicon* and *The Cherrie and the Sloe*, were originally sung. Though lost in Scotland, and never perhaps known in England, it has been preserved in Wales, by the name of *Glyn Helicon*. Lord Hailes and Mr. Tytler would have been glad of this discovery.

[Songs referred to.]

Alack and well a day.

Allan water ; My love Annie's wondrous bonny.

An auld man and a hand'ul o' siller.

And you meet a lass that's gay.

An Middleton be walking.

Annie and Colin.

An she come near me.

An the kirk wad let me be.

As I came in Falkland fair.

As I stood on the pier of Leith.

Auld lang syne :

And drink a cup of kindness,

For auld lang syne.

Be constant still.

Because I was a bonny lad.

Bessy Bell and Mary Gray. (*Original.*)

Boatman.

Come ben and kiss me man.

Come kiss with me come clap with me.

Cutty spoon and tree laddle.

Dear Billy, wilt thou go to battle.

Donald gird my cogie.

Duncans complaint.

For our lang biding here. (*Original.*)

For the love of Jean.

Four and twenty highland-men.

Fie upon Carnegie.

Had I the wate she bad me.

Hallow-even.

Hay Tammy Brandy.

Her answer it was mum.

Hey how the lang saddle.

Hey the Lockhart lee man.

Highland laddie. (*Original.*)

Highland lassie, lovely thing.

How can I be sad on my wedding-day.

I am asleep do not waken me.

I canna win hame to Eppie I trow.

I fix'd my fancy on her.

I have lost my marrow.

I loo'd a bonny lady.

I'll gae nae mair to your town.

I'll gar ye be fain to follow me.

I'll love no more.  
I'll never leave thee.  
I'll never see him more.  
I'll thro' the moor for a' that.  
I wish my love were in a mire.  
If you had been where I have been.  
In her cap she wore a feather.  
Ise ne'er rue I loo'd thee.  
It's I would have my gown made.  
Kate of Aberdeen. (*Original.*)  
Kilt thy coat Maggy.  
Lochaber no more. (*Original.*)  
Lye still good man and take another nap.  
My ain kind deary o :

And tho' the night be ne'er sae dark,  
And I be wat and wearie o,  
I'll hap thee in my petticoat,  
My ain kind dearie o.

My dear come play me o'er again.  
My love alas is dead and gone.  
My wife she dang me..  
O an I were marry'd.  
O dear mother what shall I do.  
O Jean I love thee.  
O'er Bogie.  
O'er the hills and far awa'. (*Original.*)  
One evening as I lost my way.  
Open the door to three.

Peggy I must love thee. (*Original.*)

Polwarth on the green. (*Ditto.*)

Saw ye my Peggy.

Sour plums of Gallashiels.

Steer her up and had her gawn.

Stormonts ghost.

The ale-wife and her barrel.

The auld gaud aver.

The auld Maid of Fife.

The barber and his bason.

The bonny lass of Aberdeen.

The bonnyest lass in a' the warld.

The bonnyest lass in our town.

The bursting sigh.

The corby and the pyet.

The earl of Murrays bonny thing.

The gallant shoemaker.

The gleed earl of Kelly.

The Gordons has the guiding on't.

The king of France he run a race.

The lady of the flowery field.

The man has got his mare again.

The milking-pail.

The ministers wife has learnt a sang.

The old Stewarts back again.

The old witch of Ochiltree.

The voice of my love.

The vows of endless love.  
The widows shall have spouses.  
The winding of the stream.  
The winter it is past.  
The [old] wawking of the fauld.  
There are few good fellows when Jamie's away.  
There's three good fellows down in yon glen.  
This Logan water is so deep.  
Thro' the wood laddie. (*Original.*)  
Under the green wood tree.  
Up in the morning early.  
Up the reel of Bogie.  
Up with the souters of Selkirk, and down with  
the earl of Hume.  
Was ye at the bridal.  
Wate ye how the play began.  
We'll a' to Kelso go.  
We're a' Mars men.  
Well a day.  
What have I done for want of wit.  
What the devil ails you.  
When the king came o'er the water.  
Where shall our good man lye.  
Widow are ye waking.  
Will ye go to Sheriff-muir.  
Will you lend me your loom lass.  
Willys the lad for me.



Woe is me what maun I do.

Woe's my heart that we should sunder. (*Original.*)

Ye'll ay be welcome back again.

Ye took your packs upon your backs,

Ye wadna stay, ye ran away.

N. B. The tunes to most of these songs are still preserved.

---

### CXXXVIII.

TO MR. WALKER.

DEAR SIR,

Grays Inn, 19th May, 1795.

Two or three days after the receipt of your favour of the 26th of March, I had an opportunity of calling at the Hot-wells, where I flattered myself with the pleasing expectation of catching you before your departure; but was miserably disappointed at not finding your address in the subscription-book, nor your name known to the people at the rooms. It is a delightful situation, at which I should have been highly gratified to have passed as many days as I did minutes, for I was a mere bird of passage. Perhaps you observe the face of the country with the eye of a naturalist; this therefore would afford much room for

reflection and conjecture. Williams, the Welsh bard, tells me that the present channel of the Avon is the effect of a violent explosion, which has taken place at no very distant æra. He finds the ancient bed of the river at a small distance : sees the appearances of fire, not only upon the rocks and stones, but even in pieces of iron ore which have evidently been in a state of fusion ; and traces the severed moieties of a Roman entrenchment on each side of the Avon. The fire which did all this mischief seems, from the heat and smoke of the waters both here and at Bath, to continue still burning ; and may possibly one day repeat its ravages : But I hope you will not be there at the time.

My informant could not give me the name of Wilsons novel, which he said must have been changed at the press. I have never had an opportunity of meeting the author. He translated the Irish Duan in the second volume of Pinkertons Enquiry.

I shall transmit your little "Memoir of Allan Ramsay" to Mr. Chalmers ; since, though it may not furnish dates and facts with the minute accuracy he desires, it may at least open new prospects of information, which I believe he omits no pains to procure.

A statistical account of Ireland, if executed with industry and correctness, will be a most curious and valuable work, and do considerable honour to your academy. Even the attempt deserves praise : and indeed I am much inclined to suspect that it will never be carried into execution ; at least in my time. That, however, we may all live to witness a disposition in both countries more favorable to science, and more beneficial to society than that by which they appear at present actuated is the sincere and ardent wish of,

Dear Sir,

Your very affectionate friend,

J. RITSON.

---

### CXXXIX.

#### TO THE EDITOR.

I thank you for the perusal of citizen Stanhopes letter, which does him great credit, no doubt, in several respects ; though, I think, he might have urged a better reason than he has made use of for not complying with your request ; it being perfectly clear, not only that the passage in Blackstone is nothing at all to the purpose, but

that there is no law or dictum whatever which can render it criminal to supply a traitor, felon or other malefactor with the means of defending himself on his trial. But I say again, it is infinitely more commendable for a man of talents, accused of virtuous acts or intentions, by the name of treason or sedition, to depend entirely upon his own powers, than to be beholden to the prostituted eloquence of professional hirelings, let their abilities be what they may, procured too by means of a beggarly subscription : though no one has had energy enough to do so in this country. If Horne Tooke had defended himself, without assistance, he might, indeed, have been hanged, but, I believe, as he told the court, he would have been the last that suffered under such laws.

A fine copy of Humes history is here ready for you. Citizen Wade seems to be recovering, though very slowly.

The under-sheriff of Yorkshire gets rid of the difficulty of which I expected a solution by an "and so forth," a blank which I find it impossible to supply with any sort of consistency or propriety. Tell me, therefore, what you can learn these words to stand for.

Your present of the *Scaligerana* and *Huetiana*, is very acceptable, though the first turns out to

be a different edition from that which I had formerly consulted, and which contained some anecdotes (one in particular, I recollect, concerning a desperate passage in Theophrastus) highly honourable to Scaligers learning and sagacity. You seem to think it a reflection upon him to have made use of the word *b*—— in his conversation : but, I believe, you will find it in the mouth of a Frenchman as frequently as *scoundrel* or *rascal* occurs in that of an Englishman, and generally with the same meaning. Though I am an advocate for legitimate expressions and grammatical accuracy, both in pronunciation and orthography, I abominate all refinements and restrictions, and wish every one at full liberty to adopt the language of Rabelais or Verville. In short, I detest every species of aristocracy, and would be *tout-à-fait sans culottes*.

You seem attached to *innovation*, not because it is useful, but because it is *innovation* : which is foolish. There is a sufficient reason for every thing remaining as it is, unless one can shew that some benefit would result from alteration. All nations have agreed that it is proper to prefix a capital letter to every line of poetry, whether it begins a sentence or is in the middle of one. It is not a sufficient reason for abolishing a universal

distinction that *you see no utility in it* ; you must prove that there would be utility in the abolition ; otherwise, I must conclude, there is more in letting it remain as it is ; and that you are a block-head for meddling with it. That is my opinion.

I have no interest whatever with Dilly . . . . Besides, the maps in Guthries grammar are good for nothing. I have a small 4to. atlas, which you may have, if you choose, for what it cost me ;—about half a guinea, as I believe.

I send you “ An answer to the declaration of the King of England,” which I suppose to be Paines, and shall charge you one shilling for it, as the times are too hard to suffer me to make presents. I would not inclose a set of *Thelwalls Tribune*, (only threepence a number) without first knowing whether you are desirous to have it. You have got his *Vindication*, I presume. There is much deep and just reflection as well as excellent writing in both. Apropos, Did he ever answer your letter about Yorke ? Health and fraternity !

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 8th June, 1795.

P. S. I have no remark to make on your catalogue. My only advice is, to let the means of independence supersede every other consideration.

## CXL.

## TO MR. HARRISON.

You will recollect a distich, though I cannot immediately tell where to meet with it, which says that

— heresy, *hops* and *beer*,

Came into England all in a year ;

and the period referred to is some time in the reign of King Henry the 8th.—Now, see how little reliance is to be placed on vulgar rimes and popular traditions ! *Bere* is mentioned among the particulars of Archbishop Warhams inthronization feast in 1504 ; and, in the first year of King Edward the Fourth, the office of supervisor of all the "*bere-brewers*" of England was granted to John Denysshe and others ; which grant expressly notices that *hops* were then used in the brewing of beer. As a beer-brewer, I thought this curious circumstance might afford you some little satisfaction. What the precise distinction was between the eale and beop of the Saxons and other northern nations it may be impossible to determine ; but, if it did not consist in hops, it probably did consist in some vegetable infusion

which answered the same purpose. There is a story (which I should be glad to give you from Hector Boethius, if I had his book by me) that the extirpation of the Picts was occasioned by their refusal to communicate to the Scots the art of brewing beer. You will find this anecdote alluded to in an old song printed in my second volume [of English Songs] intitled "The exaltation of ale."

I have already told you, I believe, that I derive *Hackney*, from *acen ea*, i. e. oak-water ; for, in fact, the river Lee, (I think it is) runs just below it, and the adjacent ground has once, in all probability, abounded with oaks. Now what say you to this ? *Hornsey*, in old writings, is called *Harin-gay* otherwise *Harnsey* ; that is, I conjecture, *Heron-ea* (the *g* being interposed *euphoniæ gratia*) or *Herns-ea* ; water or splashy ground frequented by *herons*, and where, perhaps, has formerly been a *heronry*. Mr. Lysons, who has published a description of "The Environs of London," supposes the etymology to be *Hare-ing* or the meadow of hares, and gives up *Hackney* as unconjecturable. I have lately been in the west of England where I discovered that *Launceston* means *Lan-Stephen* or *Stephens church* ; *Tavistock*, a town or place on the *Tawy* ; *Plympton*, a town



upon, and *Plymouth* [*recté* Plymmouth] the mouth of the river *Plym*. I made many other notable observations of this sort which are at present unfortunately forgotten. What an excellent thing would be a *Villare Anglicum* with every place its real etymology !

If you wish for any article out of the inclosed catalogue you have only to give me the number, and I will contrive to forward it to you some how or other. Health and fraternity !

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 10th June, 1795.

---

## CXLI.

### TO THE EDITOR.

I offered you Wilkinsons Atlas, as I had myself ordered it, under an egregious mistake : the price turns out to be a guinea and a half, instead of half a guinea. I presume, of course, you will have nothing to say to it.

Thelwalls Vindication, Paines (new) Rights of man, Barlows advice, part 2d. and his letter to the Piedmontese are all ready for you : but how am I to send them ?

Certainly, when you do prove the custom in question, or any other, to be wrong, it will be very absurd to object the universality of its practice as a reason for its continuance—unless, as, perhaps, I have already said, the mischief, or inconvenience incident to its abolition overbalance any possible advantage you can propose by it. (What is *right* or *wrong* but that which is *useful* or *pernicious*? Is there any other criterion?) But, till you produce your proof, which perhaps is not in your power, I am intitled to maintain that the practice is right, merely, in short, because it is a practice. Never wake a sleeping lion.

As you incline to adopt my proposed alteration in *Elinor and Juga*, I advise you to spell it *leas*, which seems the more legitimate orthography.

You are too severe upon Thelwall, though I think he ought to have answered your letter. Apropos, give me a reason for spelling *excelent* with a single *l*. Health and fraternity!

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 14th July, 95.

---

## CXLII.

TO MR. PATON.

DEAR SIR,                      Grays Inn, 21st July, 1795.

I had prepared a letter for you with which I intended to have troubled Mr. Laing, who promised, if I did not misunderstand him, to favour me with a call before he left town. Since, however, he has thought proper to take French (rather than Scotch) leave, I am under the necessity of re-writing my letter, as it ran to a couple of sheets, and one finds it difficult, under the late regulation, and at this time of the year, to procure a cover.

Mr. Chalmers, whose character and conduct intitle him to every possible instance of attention and civility, was in possession of Mr. Herds MSS. before the receipt of your last favour.

I don't know how I expressed myself respecting the long list I took the liberty of communicating ; but, in fact, it was a list of *songs*, and not of *tunes*, as you seem to imagine. However, it was not meant, in any point of view, to give you the trouble you appear to have taken about it.

The Shakspeare papers, which have of late been so much the subject of conversation, are in the possession of Mr. Samuel Ireland, of Norfolk-

street, in the Strand, who has long distinguished himself as an amateur and collector of the works of Hogarth, as well as by several literary publications. He himself informed me that they were discovered by his son, among some old writings, in the chambers of a gentleman in the Temple, whose name he was not at liberty to mention. I am since told that he has not only considerably augmented the collection which I saw, by the addition of play-house accounts and tracts from Shakspeares library, but has likewise occasionally varied the relation of his becoming possessed of it. However, as I had not the slightest doubt as to the fabrication or forgery of every thing he shewed me, my curiosity was never tempted to repeat the visit. I take the whole scheme to have been executed within these three or four years, since the publication, that is of Malones edition of Shakspeare; and by, or under, the direction of some person of genius and talents, which ought to have been better employed. It appeared to me, at the time, that Ireland himself was the dupe of this imposture, but whether he be still ignorant of its real nature and design, I cannot be quite so positive. The things I saw were deeds, letters, verses, drawings, conundrums, &c. &c. together with the entire play of K. Lear: every article of which it would be a very easy matter to demonstrate, as

well by intrinsic as by external evidence, to be a recent and palpable forgery. The most remarkable circumstance, perhaps, in this iniquitous business, and that which is, apparently, best calculated to promote its success, is, that the parchment and seals of the deeds are indisputably ancient and authentic ; so that the original writings must have been entirely effaced. This effect, however, can be, and doubtless has been, produced by a chemical preparation (well known, it seems, to forgers of notes) which removes every vestige of ink without the slightest injury to the substance on which it has been used. With respect to the anachronisms and inconsistencies which here and there occur, some, if not all of them, have, probably, been introduced for the express purpose of being, one day or other, triumphantly brought forward by the impostor himself, as demonstrative proofs of the ignorance and gullibility of the Shakspearian connoisseurs. The success of the subscription (four guineas) is not, I understand, such as to induce Mr. Ireland to give his treasures to the public for the present.

I observe with pleasure, what Mr. Herd has remarked upon the confusion made by Pinkerton of the two *Pennecuiks*. He has, with equal ignorance, confounded the two *Hamiltons* (of Bangour and Gilbertfield). But, indeed, his blunders are venial

when compared with the more criminal parts of his literary and moral character.

Do you possess, or did you ever meet with "The taill of *Rauf Coilzear*, printed at Sanct Androis be R. Lekprevik, 1572?" You, at least, recollect the title in Ames: and the hero, whoever he was, (for I cannot comprehend "how he harbreit king Charles,") is mentioned by Dunbar (*Ancient Scottish poems*, Edin. 1770):

"Kyne of *Rauf Colgard* and *Johne the reif*."

Lord Hailes, by the way, in his note upon this line, supposes *Johne the reif* to mean *Johny Armstrong*, which cannot be, since, besides that the poem itself is, in all probability, older than Armstrongs time, he is likewise named, along with this same *Rauf Coilzear*, in Bishop Douglas's *Palice of honour*, written before 1518:

"I saw *Raf Coilzear*, with his thrawin brow,  
Craibit *Johne the reif*, and auld Cow-kewpis sow."

*John the reif*, in fact, is *John the reve* (or *bailiff*), the subject of a very ancient popular poem, of which Dr. Percy, who has it in his folio MS. long since promised the publication. *Cow-kewpis-sow* is another old poem in the Hyndford MS. As for *Rauf Coilzear*, there was, perhaps, a still earlier edition of his story than *Lekpreviks*, it being mentioned in *Wedderburns Complainte*, 1549.

I am sorry to learn the death of poor Smellie, whose name reminds me of a whimsical anecdote. In the course of a conversation one evening at the *Tripe-club* (when I was last in Edinburgh,) upon the aversion which the people of Scotland had formerly borne to the family at present on the throne, Smellie remarked, as an equally strong and singular instance, that they had given the royal name, *Geordie*, to a *sir-reverence*. Now, on looking casually over "The works of Captain Alex. Ratcliffe," printed in 1696, but apparently written some years before, I find that this illustrious name had been thus lamentably degraded before the present family was heard of; from which, of course, as a loyal subject, I am anxious to remove so dirty an imputation. . . . The actual origin of this curious appellation it is now, perhaps, impossible to ascertain.\* Apropos, who is, or is to be, the new secretary to your Antiquary society? and do they intend to publish a second volume of their transactions? Adieu, my dear Sir: may you live a thousand years!

J. RITSON.

\* A learned friend informs me that "at Oxford, a *Brown George* is the name of a small loaf, not of brown bread, but baked very brown on the outside; about as much as a man could eat for breakfast." ED.

## CXLIII.

## TO THE EDITOR.

Some of your reasons are frivolous, and prove nothing ; others, again, prove too much, which comes to the same thing : so that, in fact, we are just where we were. I had much rather, however, that you should conclude them irresistible, than take the trouble, at present, to refute them. Should we ever meet, I shall be ready to discuss the subject. Your plan is adopted by Capel, a very conceited fellow, in his " Prolusions."

*Excellent* has nothing to do with either *excel* or *exceling*, both which are rightly spelled with a single *l*. It comes immediately from the French where, I need not tell you, it is invariably written with a double one. It is evident from your "small letters," that you are entirely ignorant of the principles as well of orthography as of pronunciation ; and rather wish to be singular than study to be right. For my own part, at the same time I am as little fit for a master as you are for a scholar.

*Mister Yorke* (for a culprit in a black silk coat does not appear to deserve the title of *citizen*) is certainly a very extraordinary young man : I had



no idea of his being but three and twenty. All the papers that I have seen give a very imperfect account of his trial, which I shall be glad to peruse at large. . . . The sentence, however, will be a mere flea-bite, some three or four years imprisonment with a trifling fine, and so far as one is capable of judging from present appearances, will never be executed.

It is much doubted whether Paine has had any hand in *The (new) rights of man*. The other pamphlet under his name is indisputably genuine. Two very interesting tracts, by Louvet and madame Roland, have been recently published by Johnson, both in French and English. Perhaps you may be able to borrow one or other of them at York : for, in fact, I do not apprehend you can afford to buy every thing of this sort any more than myself.

Grays Inn,  
31st July, 1795.

J. RITSON.

## CXLIV.

TO MR. HARRISON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,      Grays Inn, 22d Aug. 1795.

I shall either to day or on Monday, send to the Durham waggon a parcel which I have received from Johnson the bookseller by the order, it seems, of Dr. Hutton, whose letter you find inclosed.

I should have been glad to have accompanied this parcel with a Spanish dictionary, but am unable to procure one good for anything, at a reasonable price ; and therefore, unless you choose to go to that of the new edition, I really cannot say when it will be in my power to accommodate you.

Apropos : what did you once tell me was the meaning or etymology of *oriel* ? I lately met, in some epitaph, with the expression *aureolam cælestem*, which I translate the *heavenly oriel*. Has not that been the origin of the word ?

I am astonished that your friend Brand should be so absurd as to fancy that *Gateshead* means " the *end* of the *road*," instead of " the *head* of the *goat* ;" and that Bede has confounded " *gate*, *via*, with *goat*, *capra*." Now, it is observable, king Alfred in his translation of that venerable writer,

renders *capra caput*, hpegehearbe, (goats head) by which name, it would seem, the place went in his time. I therefore wonder it is not called rather *Righead* than *Gateshead*, though both terms have indisputably the same meaning. The parson, in that case, perhaps, would have contended that it should have been latinized *caput lira*.

I am now employing myself very busily in researches after the Celts, the Picts, and the Scots : people, I dare say, you give yourself no concern about. Dives, in hell torments, did not long more earnestly for a drop of water to cool the tip of his tongue, than I do, in this enquiry, for a portion of your learning to enlighten my way. I am quite sick of the modern writers of ancient history, who think to make amends by their fine language for the total want of industry, truth and candour. Did we but all understand Greek and Latin as well as you do, or had faithful translations of original authors, my historian need not be able, at least he should not be suffered, to write a line. I would merely supply him with a parcel of old books, a pair of scissars, and a paste brush, and I warrant you he should produce, in the course of a few hours, a better (that is, a more authentic) history of Greece or Rome than has been written these hundred years. I heartily wish, however, that you

may live a thousand : nor shall I suffer you to tell me, at the same time, that such a wish is unmeaning and absurd, since I have not the smallest doubt (or rather, I have the firmest conviction) that the secret will be one day discovered of prolonging life to a much more distant period. Ah, the fine histories we shall then have !

J. RITSON.

---

CXLV.

TO THE EDITOR.

I am assured by *citoyenne* Eaton that the preface to *The rights of man* was not written by doctor Parkinson (an *apothecary* at Hoxton) ; though I certainly believe (at present) that Paine knew nothing at all of the matter. This conviction, no doubt, gives me a very indifferent opinion of Daniel Isaac ; but whether he deserves the gallows is another matter. You seem to think there is no other mode of convincing a man of his errors than by hanging him.

I intrusted Turner with the execution of your commission in behalf of poor Wade ; whose mother, happening to be at Mabbats, when he called,

received the two guineas for him: and, on Saturday se'nnight (as I was afterward informed), his sister came to return thanks for the favour, and, at the same time, acquaint me with his death; so that, I presume, he had derived little benefit from it: your intentions, however, are not the less virtuous.

I understand that the *Esprit de loix* is not easily to be met with, but shall make further enquiry. Mores *Utopia* is one of those books which are always common enough when nobody wants them: neither Paine nor Egerton, however, has it at present. David Williams, you should recollect, is a voluminous writer, and many of his tracts, (most of which are anonymous, and some unowned) will of course, be difficult to procure. Such of them as I have you are welcome to at less than they cost me, and I will make it my business to enquire at Ridgways about the rest. Apropos, do you mean to include his *Lectures*, in two volumes 4to. which I can scarcely think worth the money you would be obliged to pay for them *new*?—I perceive he has a very advantageous character in the *Memoires of citoyenne Roland*.

If you have not read the admirable little work of Condorcet *sur les Progrès de l'Esprit Humain*, I shall enclose it in the parcel or box with Hume, &c.

You have picked up the term *citizeness*, I presume, from the translation of *Madame Roland* : I doubt how far the English language admits of this sort of feminine termination without the prescription of a foreign tongue. We have, indeed, *lioness*, *empress*, and the like, but they are all immediately from the French ; and yet I do not know what else to make of *citoyenne*. It is incomparably better than Thelwalls *citizèna* : and *female citizen* seems too starch and pedantic. I have sometimes thought of *citizenne*, but neither is this conformable to the principles of the language : so that I conclude *citizeness* will be adopted and become legitimate.

Do you know any thing about the trial of *William Britton of Bradford*, clothworker, and his man, who were convicted at your last summer-assizes of burglary, and afterward hanged ? The charge of felony, as the brother (who was likewise indicted) had been telling at Eatons, was not only totally false and groundless, but was actually (or apparently) a diabolical contrivance . . . to take these poor innocent people out of the way as suspected democrats. There had been some sort of a riot or disturbance, in which, I do not know how, one or other of them was thought to be active . . . But I only learned the story at second-

hand, and have already forgotten or confounded many of the particulars : the men, however, were hanged. I wish you would recollect, or enquire into, the nature and complexion of the evidence (which was that of the mistress, man and maid of the house, in the neighbourhood of Bradford, where the burglary was alledged to have been committed) and other circumstances of the prosecution ; as it seems a curious method of proceeding, to *suspect* a man of *jacobinism*, and *hang* him for *felony*. The brothers narrative, at any rate, appeared to have been simple and affecting, and to have had all the semblance of truth.

How came you, by the way, to palm upon me, as your own, the song beginning

“ Why, vainly, do we waste our prime ?”

You might not, I grant, directly affirm it to be so ; but your corrections, in many of the stanzas, as well as your manner of transmitting it, were apparently calculated to (and actually did) produce the same effect. Do you call this sort of conduct *honest* and *citizen-like* ?

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 12th Oct. 1795.

---

## CXLVI.

## TO THE SAME.

I expected to have been able to dispatch your parcel many weeks since, but the negligence or stupidity of Egerton, the bookseller, who had sent me two imperfect articles, still deprives me of that satisfaction. It will be difficult, however, if not impracticable to form a complete collection of David Williamses publications, even, I believe, with the assistance of such as I happen to possess, which, after all, I cannot persuade myself to part with ; and with respect to catalogues, none of the least consequence has been yet published. I hope, at the same time, that the course of a few days will enable me to show how I have executed your commission.

You probably overrate the merit of the above prolific writer. Godwin says he is never without an eye to self ; and, in fact, a man of talents, who can puff Velnos vegetable sirop, and fawn upon the Prince of Wales, cannot be a very virtuous character. I have a notion, indeed, that he is a plausible parasite, and that it was as much by well-managed flattery as by profound politics he



insinuated himself into the good graces of the citizeness Roland.

You are perfectly right, by the way, with respect to *citizeness*. The termination, indeed, comes from the French, but the composition of the instances you adduce, as well as of a number of others, is evidently our own manufacture. I do not, however, perceive the necessity we are under of feminizing the word *author*, any more than the French.

I admit that I was too hasty in supposing you meant to pass the song of "Death or Liberty" upon me as your own composition. It is much better, at the same time, that I should be mistaken than that you should be criminal.

I should be glad to learn what sort of directions you gave to your friend Wade as to the mode in which he was to die ; and likewise what you mean by "his previous situation." Your two guineas, I fear, came too late to be of much service to him, or even, perhaps for him to be sensible of your friendship.

What *am* I to say about Yorkes trial? I have not yet read it, nor do I see that you have any opportunity of sending it to me.

The new edition of Godwins *Political Justice*, is published to-morrow in 2 vols. 8vo. price 14s.

The York booksellers will probably have his "Considerations on Lord Grenvilles and Mr. Pitts bills," as it is the only pamphlet of consequence, upon this interesting subject, which has yet appeared.

I have scarcely courage enough to apply my principles of orthography to the verb or participle in *en* : not knowing well what to do with the words *given*, *riven*, *driven*, &c. &c. However, I take *ripen*, *hasteen*, *spokeen*, &c. to be perfectly accurate.

It is not easy to foresee the consequences of the above bills, though I believe it pretty certain that both will pass : and probably, the ministers success in this measure will, by rendering him completely odious and unpopular, have a rapid and effectual tendency to his destruction. Its progress, indeed, seems to have already commenced ; and it is, perhaps, even at present no paradox to affirm that Mr. Pitt is actually the best friend to, and most active promoter of, the cause of liberty in the three kingdoms.

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 23d Nov. 1795.

P. S. As Egerton informs me he cannot perfect Williamses "Political Lectures" (3 vols.) and

"Lessons to a Prince," which were both second-hand, and I think it would be extravagant to get them new, I must send your parcel off without them, unless you will let me defer it till the publication of the catalogues which generally appear between this and Christmas. I see a copy of Montesquieu, 2 vols. large 8vo. in boards, on Flexneys window-board. Will you have it, or wait?

---

## CXLVII.

## TO THE SAME.

By a prodigious effort I have at length dispatched your trunk and its contents to the York waggon. To have sent it by sea would have cost you less, but as you expressly mentioned the waggon, I had no choice. You will find, among the books, a fine copy of the Lectures on Education, &c. which I got, very reasonably, I think, after the date of my last letter. I suspect I have omitted to charge the *Lessons for a prince*, four shillings and sixpence, which will make the amount four pounds nineteen shillings, and the balance eight pounds seven shillings and ten pence.

"It is rather singular that" you should not know that citizen Mason never inserted the *Isis* in *any* edition of his poems, unless I be very much misinformed.

I have already told you that the MS. I lent parson Dade is a sheet or two, in my own writing, intituled, "A glossary of obsolete or difficult words occurring in the charters granted to the duchy of Lancaster." I should like very much to get it back again.

Forty-three years this Christian hero liv'd  
among his Irish countrymen, then inspired  
with zeal to propagate the Christian faith  
he visited the Scots, to whom he preach'd  
the gospel four and thirty years.

Is this verse or prose, Sir Oracle?

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 15th Decem. 1794.

---

### CXLVIII.

TO MR. WALKER.

DEAR SIR,

Grays Inn, 3d Feb. 1796.

Your every-way welcome letter was the more agreeable as it announced your recovery from illness, to which we are all more or less liable, but

of which we do not all get the better. Your silence, of course, is even too well excused, but how shall I apologise for my own?

It is, indeed, much to be wished that, at least, the best of the pamphlets which have appeared in the Ossian controversy were reprinted: and I am in hopes that a much abler hand than you are pleased to mention might be prevailed upon to undertake the task. I mean Mr. Chalmers, who is perfect master of the subject, and possesses a complete collection of the necessary tracts. Apropos: has any thing to this purpose (beside O'Connor's *Dissertation*) been published in Dublin? Have you any translations from the Irish, by Chevalier O'Carrol (if I do not mistake the name), or General Harold, with whom a friend of mine had some conversation at Dusseldorf? I shall probably avail myself of Dr. Youngs permission, in some way or other, and am much obliged to you for obtaining it: though it is certainly to be regretted that his own intentions do not render it unnecessary.

If Johnson be disposed to risk a second edition of the "English Songs," it will receive considerable improvement from your equally interesting and accurate communications. The title, I take it, of Dr. Byrom to "My time, O ye muses,"

cannot be disputed. I do not recollect to have ever met with any poetry of the Bishop King you mention. Is there no mistake in making "Blackey'd Susan" mean "Mrs. Montfort the actress?" The verses your friend refers to, by Sir Henry Wotton, I have printed elsewhere : \* they were not, I am persuaded, intended for a song.

I have not yet perused Hayleys Life of Milton, though I perceive he has made much use of the Italian tragedy, which I think you mentioned to me when I had the pleasure of seeing you. But I do not observe that he has been apprised of the *Angeliada* of Erasmo Valvasone, to which, I am apt to suspect, Milton was as much indebted as to any thing his biographer has enumerated.

You have quoted (in your most curious and instructive Memoirs of the Irish Bards) "a translation of that valuable work [the annals of Innisfallen] now preparing for the press by a young gentleman of this city." This "young gentleman," I understand, is Mr. Teige (or Theophilus) O'Flanagan, of whose knowledge and abilities I have a very high opinion; which makes me the rather anxious to know whether the translation is

\* In the *English Anthology*, i. 18, beginning,

"You meaner beauties of the night." Ed.

yet, or ever will be printed. No publication, of which I have any idea (at least nothing that has hitherto appeared), will so effectually tend to illustrate the ancient history both of Ireland and of Scotland, which is, at present, enveloped in the nubilar illusions (if I may so express myself) of wild and fabulous invention. It is much to be wished, however, that the same able hand would accompany his version of the above annals, by another of the no less valuable ones of Ulster (of which by the way we have a sort of imperfect translation in the Museum) and Tigernach. O what an accession would such a work be to history and to truth ! Do not neglect, if you please, to say something to me upon this subject ; and likewise concerning the “ bardic remains,” which you elsewhere tell us “ he is now about to translate.”

I much lament we have never heard any thing more of the new “ Irish Historical library,” so long since promised by Colonel Vallancey. What is become of it ?

I have enquired at several booksellers for Mr. O’Flanagans translation of Lynch’s *Cambrensis eversus*, so infamously abused in *The critical review*. Is it to be had here, or can you put me in the way to get at it ?

Adieu, my dear good Sir; with the best of wishes for your health and happiness, I remain

Your sincerely affectionate friend

J. RITSON.

P. S. I long for the "observations" you flatter me with on my little volumes of *Scottish songs*.

---

## CXLIX.

### TO THE EDITOR.

I was quite positive, on the receipt of your letter, that I had inclosed the "Letters on political liberty" in the parcel; and concluded your mistake to arise from my having written "Thoughts" for "Letters:" but some days after, having the curiosity to turn up a pamphlet, which I observed lying on its face upon the desk, I found that, for all my positiveness, they had some how or other contrived to be left behind. I have, therefore, put them under a cover ready to be delivered or sent as you shall direct. You will also find, stuck in between the leaves, a cancel quarter-sheet for *Robin Hood*, which you may put in its place, if you think proper.



I have not yet seen such an edition of Ariosto as I suppose you would like : and when I do meet with one it will in all probability, cost you a guinea.

Your observations on Godwins inaccuracies are well founded. I apprised him of all or most of them long ago ; and can only attribute their retention to his obstinacy, or ignorance, I am, however, preparing another list for him. They say he is about another novel.

I cannot exactly account for the omission of *Isis* in Masons poems ; peradventure [I do not like *perhap*, though we say *mayhap*, and *perhaps* is a manifest barbarism ; it requires to be familiarised] he did not think very highly of it ; no more do I : and it is observable that T. Warton did not include *The triumph of Isis* in any edition of his poems before that of 1779 ; though this latter is a far superior production, in my opinion.

The extract I gave you, though intended for verse, could no otherwise be distinguished from prose than by the initial capitals, which being, upon your plan, totally discarded, the authors intention was merely to be guessed at, if not altogether undiscoverable. It evinces, therefore, the necessity of capitals on such occasions.

Why are there to be two pees in *happ-yest* ?  
Do you write *hap* or *happ* ?

You have got an extensive and magnificent library in the three articles you mention; and will show your wisdom in being contented with it, at least for the present. When you have secured a sufficient annual income, dispose of it as you please: but, by all means, let that be your first object. Farewell.

Grays Inn, 4th Feb. 1796.

J. RITSON.

P. S. Has every liberty in Yorkshire (as Holderness, for instance, or Langbargh) its peculiar jail? or does the Sheriff receive the body at any time before the return of the writ?—If you can give me any other information upon this subject, it may be of service.

---

CL.

TO THE SAME.

Grays Inn, 26th Feb. 1796.

You evidently do not understand my question about liberties. I mean to ask if the Sheriff of Yorkshire conceives himself under an obligation to receive, or, in fact, does uniformly receive into the Castle, the bodies of prisoners arrested or

taken in execution by the bailiff of a franchise, whether such franchise has or has not a jail within itself ? I am afraid you have been in an attorney and under-sheriffs office so long to very little purpose. You would do well, I think, to lay your *Encyclopédie*, Voltaire, Rousseau, &c. upon the shelf for a few years, and endeavour by all possible means to make yourself perfect master of your business : it requires nothing but application.

The catalogue you have sent me is a year old, and I certainly had it either from yourself, or from Baldwin, long ago. If, however, the following articles be unsold and in good condition, I shall be glad to purchase them :

787 Seldeni Opera, 6 tom. in 3, 2*l.* 2*s.*

2710 Tacitus, 4 vol. 12*s.*

5043 Q. Curtius, 2 vol. in 1, 3*s.* 6*d.*

I suppose they can be sent up, and I pay for them here, free of expence.

I am obliged to you for the perusal of Red-heads trial. He is certainly a very extraordinary young man, and his fate much to be lamented. You seem to charge him with a want of veracity ; and, *perhap* (if it please you), what he says about the change of his name may require explanation ; as, I have been told, that he had not the remotest connection with that of Yorke, and consequently,

presume, could not have effected such change "according to the usual forms." You are, nevertheless, too severe in your criticism upon *Ariosto*, since, had you consulted Plinys Letters, you would have been convinced, I think, that the misnomer was a mere typographical erratum.

When you say "a line of poetry is as much marked by its end as its beginning," you mean, I suppose, that it is not uniformly of the same length with a line of prose. In the extract, I sent you, however, all the lines were of equal length; and I say again that a page full of such stuff could only have been known to be verse by the initial capitals. Besides, in admitting a great letter at the commencement of each verse you are inconsistent with yourself: for why should a verse (or stanza, rather) be thus distinguished any more than a line, supposing that the former do not conclude with a full stop? Again; you were thinking, when you said this, of poetry in stanzas; but what is that to Homers Iliad? If "immortal honour" is to be gained by the adoption of your plan, how happens it then to have been missed by Master Capel, who printed (if I be not mistaken) his edition of Shakspeare in that way? You will probably admire it on that account. At any rate his "Prolusions," 1761, are so printed. But I do

not know that either he or his publications acquired any honour, mortal or immortal, by this fantastical deviation.

G——, I suspect, is writing some sort of a history of the French revolution ; with a view, perhaps, to wash the blood off his favorite Robespierre. I have no doubt of its proving a parcel of lies and sophisms. He and H—— are the most violent pretenders to truth I know ; and there are scarcely two men living whose assertions I should be more scrupulous about, particularly in an important history. Apropos : you have heard, belike, that he has written a history of the Roman republic, which the booksellers will not buy ; and a tragedy, on I know not what subject, which the managers will not play. If I am to judge of his ear by the passage he has so miserably corrupted from *Douglas*, the latter must be a most harmonious composition. You will see what Thelwall says of him in the preface to his *Tribune*, of which, you will recollect, it was the last number. Farewell.

J. RITSON.

---

## CLI.

TO MR. HARRISON.

MY GOOD FRIEND,     Grays Inn, 2d March, 1796.

I have at length picked up the only Danish grammar that seems to be at all known in this country, and which is, itself, very rarely to be met with. I know not, at the same time, how far it will answer your purpose ; but unless one had an opportunity (as you might have from Stockton) of sending to Denmark, it will be scarcely possible to suit you better. The author is that famous bishop of Bergen who wrote *The Natural History of Norway*, and other learned and curious pieces. You did not, I presume, want a *Dictionary*, as that is a very common book.

I waited so long for a cheap copy of some Spanish dictionary, that I thought it best to take the new edition, which has not, that I can find, much reduced the price of any former one, and is, I suppose, the most accurate and perfect ; price one pound ten shillings. Apropos, Do you want a *Swedish* grammar or dictionary ?

You will find a few leaves, from different catalogues, of German books : it will be very easy

for you to signify if you want any of them. This species of literature seems much in vogue. A review of imported publications is talked of, and will probably succeed.

I had proceeded thus far when I was favoured with your letter of the 26th ultimo. "The long delay of the last part of Huttons Dictionary," is to be accounted for, partly, from my unwillingness to put you to the expence of carriage for a single book, and partly, from a desire to increase the parcel by one thing or another which I hoped would prove agreeable to you. It now waits for Malones Detection of the Shaksperian forgery, which was expected to make its appearance several weeks, or rather months, since. I shall likewise have an opportunity of inclosing the first number of the German review already mentioned.

I shall not dispute the authority of the *Promptuarium parvulorum* (for I recollect your showing me the instance) that *Oriel* is an *alder-tree*: but you will easily perceive that this signification (whatever it may have to do with the college of that name) is entirely foreign to the *Oriol* (*Oriolum*) of our old monasteries, which was evidently some outer room, though I do not find it, under that denomination, in the modern descriptions of Durham and Glastonbury Abbeys, the only ones

I have by me. It frequently occurs, however, in Matthew Paris, and is explained by Wats (I know not with what propriety) "A lower gallery or gatehouse." I likewise think I have met with the word *Oriel*, or *Oriol*, in this sense, in some old English writer, or late glossarist, but am unable at present to recover it. I have no acquaintance whatever with John Wake, who seems a very ingenious etymologist.

I take the liberty to present you with my two late publications, the Glossaries to which may occasion you some amusement, in detecting my errors, or supplying my defects.

Your fund is yet unexhausted. When it fails you shall have a just and particular account: but I will have no more money in advance. You are at perfect liberty to get both into and out of my debt as fast as you please. Farewell, and believe me

Your sincerely affectionate friend

J. RITSON.

P. S. Du Cange, who explains *Oriolum* by *Porticus*, *atrium*, adds, "*Vocis etymon non agnosco.*"—Malones Detection has increased in bulk from a pamphlet to a book, and in price from half-a-crown to seven shillings. However, I send it at



a venture, and shall allow you a month or six weeks to return it in, if dissatisfied with the purchase.—All-fools-day.

---

## CLII.

## TO THE EDITOR.

Ah, you are a clever fellow ! after half a dozen attempts you have at last (with Mr. Wolleys assistance) given a precise answer to one half of my question, and to that half too, which you might have easily guessed was of no sort of consequence to me. However, “cudgel thy brains no more about it ; for your dull ass will not mend his pace by beating.” . . .

I know of no authors who give an authentic account of events from the revolution to the present time, unless it be Sir John Dalrymple (*Memoirs of Great Britain*, 3 volumes 4to. and 8vo.) to the battle of La Hogue ; Macpherson (*History of G. B. and original papers*, 4 volumes 4to.), to the accession of the present family ; and Smollett, to the peace of 1748. Always prefer Tory or Jacobite writers ; the Whigs are the greatest liars in the world. You consult history for facts, not

principles. The Whigs, I allow, have the advantage in the latter, and this advantage they are constantly labouring to support by a misrepresentation of the former. A glaring instance of this habitual perversion is their uniform position that the King, Lords and Commons, are the three estates of the realm ; than which nothing can be more false. Now, it so happens, that the bad principles of the Tories are corroborated by the facts and records of history, which makes it their interest to investigate and expose the truth : and I can readily believe that all the alterations which Hume professes to have made in his history in favour of that party were strictly just. The revolution itself was so iniquitous a transaction, and we have had such a succession of scoundrels since it took place, that you must not wonder if corruption or pusillanimity have prevented historians from speaking of both as they deserve.

You will do Mr. Malone great injustice if you suppose him to be in all respects what I may have endeavoured to represent him in some. In order that he may recover your more favourable opinion, let me recommend to your perusal, the discussion, in his *prolegomena*, intitled "Shakspeare, Ford and Jonson ;" and his "Dissertation on the three parts of King Henry the Sixth" (to

which I am more indebted for an acquaintance with the manner of our great dramatic poet than to any thing I ever read). His recent enquiry into the Shaksperian forgeries evinces, also, considerable industry and acuteness, and is certainly worth your reading. I do not mean to say that there was any difficulty in the subject ; but it has certainly derived importance from the ignorant presumption and cullibility of certain literary aristocrats who have considerable influence upon what is called the public. As to the personalities in my *Quip modest* and *Cursory criticisms*, I can only defend them by those of my antagonist. In behalf of the *Remarks* I have nothing to say. Indeed, I should think you much better employed in putting them into the fire, than in a vain attempt to diminish the inaccuracies of such a mass of error both typographical and *authorial*. Farewell.

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 20th April, 1796.

---

## CLIII.

TO MR. HARRISON.

Grays Inn, 21st June, 1796.

MY GOOD FRIEND,

I readily agree with you that Barettis (or rather Delpinos) Dictionary is a very crude compilation : but I presume, at the same time, that it is the best of many bad ones ; all of which, by the way, except it be old Percival or Minshew, are scarce and dear. You do not, however, expect me to warrant the excellence or perfection of the works I send you, as I suppose it will be pretty difficult to meet with any of that description. As to the defect of that particular copy, I can only excuse it by saying that it is not usual to collate new books, and that the sheet might have been easily supplied. However, as the bookseller has taken it back, and I conclude you do not mean to have another copy, there is an end of the business.

You now receive the Danish and Swedish Dictionaries of Wolffe and Serenius : the latter (particularly with both parts together) is a very scarce book, and cost, I confess, rather more than I expected ; but I question if another copy is to be had in London.

"Who is Malone?"—Where are my *Cursory Criticisms*?

No. 12430 (Peter the Great) in Lackingtons catalogue was sold; and so, unfortunately was the Swedish grammar, which I despair of recovering. No. 12433, is a heap of trash: you had an article or two from it some years since.

I thank you for the *errata* in *Robin Hood*, which I could scarcely have believed. You need not have been afraid to "indulge conjectures," as it would be sufficient to point out the corrupt or suspicious passage. *Minot*, I am persuaded, is more correct; and surely both the text and the typography have some merit.

A few inedited poems of Hoccleve have been splendidly printed in a thin quarto by Mr. George Mason; but they, like every other composition of that writer, are mere trash.

I have already asked, perhaps, if you wish for Bûrghers poems. The ballad of Lenoré has undergone three different translations: the last of which, by the honorable Mr. Spencer, is a most pompous folio, with several beautiful engravings, and the German text on the opposite page:—price one guinea. The laureats production is eighteen pence.

Have you yet seen the new "Parochial history

of Stockton?"—in which, by the by, you have got a snug niche ; though, I doubt, whether you will think yourself much indebted for it either to the author or to his informant . . .

Health and friendship !

J. RITSON.

---

## CLIV.

### TO THE EDITOR.

If you can find no better employment for the old womans two guineas than the foolish device and pitiful conceit you have so elaborately described, you would do well, I think, to return them ; since I cannot easily imagine that there is so very an old woman in the world that would make you a present of two guineas if she thought you had no more occasion for them than to play the fool with. As for my part, I assure you I will have no sort of concern in the business. If you must have a coat of arms, you had best apply to the heralds office at once, and be made a gentleman according to law. Your crest, if I might advise, should be a fools cap, in commemoration of John Franks, the only person of your name that ever

acquired, I believe, any sort of celebrity in history.\* Your arms might be "a full-acorned boar" in his sty (for thence, as I take it, comes your right honorable surname), and your motto, in honest English, *This is mine Frank*: as I perceive you are fond of punning. How do you like my notion? You have a very inaccurate idea, at the same time, of the expence of designing and engraving, when you fancy your conundrum could be effected for a couple of guineas.

To be sure I do not congratulate myself with much sincerity on having supplied the author of the "Parochial history of Stockton" with his materials; but I confess I had no suspicion either that he had so little assistance from any other quarter, or was so totally incompetent to the task. . . . Indeed, I told him that a penny-history would be good enough for the subject; and might

\* Alluding to a little penny book intitled "The birth, life, and death of *John Franks*, with the pranks he played though a meer fool," referred to by sir John Hawkins in a note on a passage in *K. John*, (Johnson and Steevens's *Shakspeare*, x. 422). The device and motto, so unmercifully treated, were simply a cap of liberty, crowning the proud boast of Rinaldo:

"*Libero i'nacqui, e vissi, e morrò sciolto:*"

and designed, very innocently, for the inner cover of the editors books.

have added, I perceive, with equal truth, that it would be best suited to his capacity. . . .

You will not easily convince me that you understand Shakspeare the better because you are "surprised to find the very slight necessity there is for any notes." I have read him over repeatedly, and am convinced that a great number of "long good-for-nothing notes" is still wanting to render him intelligible to every one who does not make him a study: and even, after all that can possibly be done, many passages will remain perpetually inexplicable. Apropos: what do you mean by understanding him? Can you distinguish his style and manner from those of the dramatists upon whom he has improved, or of the players by whom he has been interpolated? Read over the *First part of Henry the sixth*, *Pericles*, *Titus Andronicus*, and the rest of what are called his disputed plays, and tell me which parts of them were written by Shakspeare. Read *Coriolanus*, and see if you can detect those interpolations, from which, perhaps, very few even of his undisputed productions are entirely free.

They say the French are coming! Health and fraternity!

Grays Inn,  
22d June, 1796.

J. RITSON.



## CLV.

TO MR. HARRISON.

Now what do you say to a little etymology? I have lately made some very important discoveries in that line. And first as to the word

Harrow,

which you have so frequently met with: as, for instance, in Chaucer:

“Thai crieden, out! *harow* and *wala wa!*”

This word we certainly had from the Norman-French, with whom *Clameur de Haro* signifies much the same as our hue and cry, or the Scottish horning. Numberless have been the attempts to etymologize it; mine is the last, and I need scarcely add, the only successful one. Some say it was originally *Ha Rou!* and meant O Raoul, or Rollo; as if one appealed to, or claimed aid of, the duke of Normandy of that name. Hickes would derive it from *hier*, Cim. *hairus*, Gothick; a sword; and Tyrwhitt from *har*, altus, and *op*, clamor, two Islandick words, which, he thinks, were once common to all the Scandinavian nations. But mark, only, how I put them all down. The Irish, as appears from Camdens *Britannia*, when

they engaged, used to cry out as loud as they could *Pharroh*, which that authors informant supposes to be the military *Barritus* spoken of by Ammianus, but, whether or not, there can be no doubt that it is the *Haro* or *Harop* of Normandy or Flanders. Q. E. D. The *Barritus*, or *Barditus* by the way appears to have been peculiar to the Germans; which may seem to countenance the notion entertained by some writers that the Irish Scots (a different people, it is clear, from the old Hibernians) were Scythians of the same race.

When the *lues venerea* made its first appearance in Scotland, it was believed to be highly contagious, and the privy council, in 1497, made an order "That all manner of persons, being within the freedom of the city of Edinburgh, who were "infected with the said contagious plague called the *Grandgore*," should be transported to the island of Inchkeith in the firth of Forth, "there to remain till god provide for their health." This appellation, I am persuaded, has puzzled many a shrewd pate, and I think myself particularly fortunate in being enabled to account for it. *La grand'gorre*, I find, was the name of a magnificent habit anciently worn by the French ladies, and the subject of vehement declamation by the preachers of the time. Isabel of Bavaria, queen of France, and

wife of king Charles VI. was vulgarly called *La grand'gorre*. Old Cotgrave explains *Femmes à la grande gorree*, "huffing or flaunting wenches; costlie or stately dames:" and *Gorre*, it seems, which properly signified "bravery, gallantnesse, finenessse, trimnesse, gorgeousnesse, gaudinesse," was likewise a phrase of Normandy for the same disease. *Gorriere*, also, which originally meant, a woman gallantly dressed or proud of her finery, came at length to signify a woman of pleasure. . . . Thus, too, the appellation of *A Winchester goose*, which originally and properly belonged to the female inhabitants of the stews on the Bank-side, within the jurisdiction of that see, became, first, a general term for a prostitute, and at length the name of one of the symptoms of the above disease. These are curious disquisitions; but I think you have had a sufficient specimen for the present.

I have got a few German books, in philosophy, philology, and the mathematicks, which I bought tolerably cheap: but they will make too large a parcel to send otherwise than by the waggon, so that if you want anything else you must send me word within two or three weeks after receipt hereof, that you may not be subject to the expence of double carriage.

I inclose you the lamentations of a poor miserable damned soul of a *brewster* ; in order that you may be aware of the punishments prepared in the next world for such as deal dishonestly in the manufacture of our old British beverage, which cheereth the heart of both gods and men.

Apropos : can the word *Tervagant*, which we have corrupted into *Termagant*, be derived from *ter* and *vagans*, as if it originally implied a magician, who thrice encircled some object, a fire for instance ?

Is *aa* or *ou*, water, in German ? Because if so, you see, the river *Danube* (*Donau*) literally signifies *Don-water*.

Will you be so good, the next time you go to Newcastle, as to pay Mr. Bewick, the engraver, the sum of one pound six shillings, which, it seems, I am indebted to him. You recollect Hall and Elliot printing for me a little collection intitled and called *The Northumberland garland*, of which I have been hitherto unable to procure a single copy : though they were to have sent me a hundred. These people, I understand, are both dead, and who are their representatives, or how to come at my books, I am perfectly ignorant, and whether ever I shall be at Newcastle again I really do not know. So that if you or Mr. Bewick can be of

any service to me in this case, I shall think myself much obliged to you. The executors appear to be very dishonest people, for though I wrote, more than once, I believe, either about or after Halls death, I never received any answer. The disposition of persons in trade to be scoundrels is astonishing! Health and friendship!

Grays Inn,  
15th August, 1796.

J. RITSON.

P. S. The best Spanish dictionary is that by Sobrino, with the explanations in French and Latin. I should have bought it the other day had I not thought it was going too high. You ought to mention your price.

I send you four numbers of a philological magazine to be doing with.

---

CLVI.

TO MR. ROWNTREE.

DEAR ROWNTREE,      Grays Inn, 22d Nov. 1796.

. . . . .  
You will perceive by to-days paper that lord Malmsbury is about to return as wise as he went. Whatever the ministers object was in this ridicu-

lous embassy, he has been apparently disappointed. It is a notorious fact that the embarrassments of government are beyond anything ever known. The treasury is unable to pay the smallest bill, though perpetually besieged by clamorous duns : and it turns out that even the miserable pittance collected from the police-offices (being the weekly amount of fees, fines, &c.) has, most rapaciously and dishonestly, been applied to the exigencies of the state, while the tradesmen, constables and other persons, who should be paid out of the money, are in the greatest distress and have actually advertised a general meeting to consider how they can obtain relief. Not a soul seems to have the remotest conception how Mr. Pitt will be able to weather the impending storm. The 30th instant will be a momentous day. Ah, ça ira, ça ira, ça ira, &c.

Yours sincerely,

J. RITSON.

---

## CLVII.

## TO THE EDITOR.

Grays Inn, 29th Nov. 1796.

I am very sorry to hear of your indisposition, but hope that your health is by this time, or will be shortly, re-established. I presume that you have recourse to medical advice, which, occasionally and by chance, may prove beneficial : for, I confess, I have a very indifferent opinion both of the profession and the professors in their present state. I most feelingly condole with you on the loss of your teeth ; that of my own having dearly taught me to appreciate this misfortune in others. I do not know what care you have been accustomed to take of them ; but I took some pains at an early period to make you sensible how much was necessary, I suspect however, that all the care in the world is insufficient to prevent the fatal progress of an inveterate scurvy with which, I fancy, both of us are affected. I have been advised to procure a set of false teeth, but the expence, the trouble, and other disagreeable consequences incident to such an acquisition, have hitherto discouraged me from making the application. There is a Frenchman here, one Du

Chemant, who supplies artificial teeth of a composition resembling china, but much harder, which are infinitely superior, I understand, to those of the ordinary manufacture : but his terms, at the same time, are disproportionately immoderate.

I have not yet read, nor do I know that I shall ever read, Roscoes *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici*. It is universally applauded, indeed ; but the truth is that I have no great inclination for polite literature ; and Godwin says he found it heavy and uninteresting. I find that this same citizen Roscoe is well known to be the author of the fine song on the French revolution, though I did not know it till you told me. I am likewise informed that Dr. Currie is the real author of Jasper Wilsons letter, and that Roscoe had no other concern in it than polishing the stile.

It is highly probable that I shall be able to pick you up a good edition of *Don Quixote* in the course of the winter. I have, indeed, a very neat one which belonged to Baynes, but cannot bring myself to part with it : although I possess the splendid quarto of the Spanish academy, and never, in fact, look into either. You will certainly find it a difficult book to read, let your friend Crofts knowledge of the language be what it may. You should



have no less than three dictionaries : 1. Baretts, or Sobrinos ; 2. that of the Spanish academy ; 3. the *Tesoro* of Cobarrubias ; none of which, I suppose, you either possess or know any thing about. Apropos : Do not you think you could make a better use of your time ?

Master Crofts anecdote of Goldsmith is equally entertaining and characteristick.\* I have not the least doubt that he thought his collection particularly valuable and magnificent. Sir John Hawkins will tell you the care he took of this same literary treasure. Having reminded him one day (as I recollect the story) of some reference which Goldy had promised him, most probably to one of the books you mention, he very gravely marched to his library and returned with the leaf in his hand.

Langhornes translation of Plutarch is undoubtedly the best, and, indeed, the only one worth reading. But, might not you as well read Blackstone ? First make yourself independent, and

\* This alludes to an account given by the editor to Mr. Ritson of a visit paid to Dr. Goldsmith, (who then resided in Grays Inn), by the late Mr. John Croft of York, in the expectation of gratifying his literary curiosity with a sight of the doctors splendid library, which upon enquiry was found to consist of two odd volumes, one of Buffons *Natural History*, and the other of the French *Encyclopédie*, and both probably lent to him by his bookseller. ED.

then, in the devils name, read what you please.  
You "can live upon twenty pounds a year?"  
very well: acquire it!

Health and prosperity!

J. RITSON.

---

CLVIII.

TO MR. HARRISON.

Grays Inn, 31st November, 1796.

MY WORTHY FRIEND,

Though I begin to despair of ever seeing or hearing from you again; I must now and then put you in mind of an old acquaintance who holds you in particular esteem. You herewith receive a parcel of books, one of which you will find has been sent to me from Johnson the booksellers, and is a present to you, I presume, from somebody or other; the rest you will have to pay for; but do not let this piece of affliction disturb your repose, or make you drink one single glass of ale the less. All the German books together have only cost me seven shillings and three-pence; and as for Bryants tract, I insert it at a venture for your amusement, and will readily take it back again if you should not wish to keep it. The

siege of Troy, at the end of three thousand years, turns out as completely visionary as that of Albracca. This discovery, I am persuaded, will make you look about you, and rub up your old rusty Greek, like another Nestor called to the defence of all that is sacred. No answer to Master Bryant has been yet advertised, but I have no doubt that grand preparations are making, and that the press will sweat for it :

“ When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war.”

Who said there was no such word as *Inimicalis* ? It is used by Sidonius. *Vide* Salmons *Stemmata Latinitatis*, &c.

A curious etymological dictionary has been lately published in Germany (2 or 3 volumes 4to.) : I forget the authors name ; but it is said to have great merit, and, in fact, to be the best thing of the kind that ever appeared.

I presume you received the parcel which I sent down by Wear, who did not, it seems, come over to Durham.

I have a head-ake which doth pain me sore,  
“ That really I can write but one line more,”  
And that is, I am yours from my hearts core.

J. RITSON.

---

## CLIX.

TO MR. LAING.

DEAR CITIZEN,

Grays Inn, Dec. 1, 1796.

Your agreeable favour of the 20th of September ought to have received an earlier acknowledgment ; but, as the saying is, " Better late than never."

I suppose by this time you are better acquainted with the nature of David Macphersons late publication. He originally intended that the map should accompany his edition of Wyntown ; but was persuaded, I understand, to make it, with the Memoir and Index, a separate work, by Mr. Chalmers himself. How far the publication interferes with the latters great work, I have no opportunity of ascertaining. But the modern practice of authors is rather to rival than assist one another ; and indeed a mysterious jealousy on one side seems naturally enough to generate a secret hostility on the other. I confess I thought from the first there was an appearance of opposition in Mr. Macphersons plan, and even went so far as to express a wish that it might be sacrificed to the

more extensive labours of his friend ; but he did not profess to know precisely what those labours were to end in ; nor was at all willing, I perceive, to relinquish his own design. As for the rest, though his industry and correctness deserve every degree of praise, I fancy he will find his account neither in the fame nor in the profits of the publication.

It is very true, my friend, that literary imposture is not confined to your side of the Tweed ; but "evil communications corrupt good manners." It is a curious fact that the name of John Pinkerton should be found in the list of those orthodox antiquaries who have certified their belief in the authenticity of the Shakspeare papers. You will be surprised to hear, but you may depend upon it for a truth, that all the plays, deeds, letters, and papers of every description which have been produced by Ireland, owe their existence solely to his son Samuel, *alias* William-Henry, a boy of nineteen, in whom no talents of any kind were ever before discovered, even by the father himself, who has, in fact, been the completest of all possible dupes to the astonishing artifices of this second Chatterton.

I find a copy of the *Annals of the Frasers* (Edinburgh, 1795), among the presents to the

Society of Antiquaries, communicated in their last volume, and concluded, of course, it might be had of some or other of your booksellers ; but, perhaps, it has been privately printed. Have you made any further inquiry after Johnsons *fifth* volume of the " Scots Musical Museum."

Whether we meet in the North or in the South, I shall be heartily glad to see you ; and hope, in the latter case, to be favoured with a little more of your company than I was last year.

I consider myself much obliged to you for the opportunity of writing a line to the worthy and intelligent Mr. Herd. I must candidly acknowledge that I have found amiable and excellent qualities in Edinburgh, for which, I am afraid, a Scottish man must seek long, and perhaps ineffectually, in this gigantic metropolis. They say that, " Out of the North cometh forth evil ;" is that the reason so much good remains behind ? Adieu !

Health and prosperity.

J. RITSON.

P. S. Since the date of my letter, which has been so long delayed by accident or indisposition (I mean partly by both) young Ireland has published a pamphlet, avowing himself the sole contriver and fabricator of the Shakspearian imposture. The neat work of my friend C.[halmers]

has likewise made its appearance, very much indeed to the credit of his abilities, his industry, and acuteness, but not at all, as I conceive, to that of his morality, in coming forward, under whatever character, as the apologist of imposture or credulity.

---

## CLX.

TO MR. HARRISON.

Grays Inn, 26th January, 1797.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

All the information necessary, or, at least, possible, to be obtained, respecting Comus, Milton, Lawes, or "the house of Bridgewater," will be found in Wartons edition of Miltons *poems*, second edition, 1791, and Hayleys *Life of Milton*, 1795.

Upon the subject of the spurious Shakspeare-papers there have been recently published, *primo*, a pamphlet by young Ireland avowing himself the sole contriver and perpetrator of the forgery; *secundo*, a *preface or introduction* by old Ireland, to prove that he had no hand in it, and shew how

it was countenanced ; *tertio*, an apology for the believers, in answer to Malones *Inquiry*, by George Chalmers, Esq. F. R. A. S. a very able and acute performance ; which must, necessarily, bring Malone forward again, in reply. You must tell me if I be to send you all or any of these publications : though you are, most probably, sick of the controversy.

By referring me to the authority of the Stockton lads, in *your* time, you seem to confound *Harrow* with *Hurra* ; or to consider the latter as a mere corruption ; which seems very probable.

If you have got Sobrino, I really think you can have no occasion for a Spanish and *English* dictionary.

You want to know *my* " sense, and proper use of *self* and *selves* !" In fact, I have prepared a dissertation upon the subject, which, however, is both too long and too frivolous to trouble you with. *Self*, according to my reasoning, is always a substantive ; as in *my self*, *thy self*, &c. and, consequently, *himself* is anomalous and absurd. This hypothesis, if you please to call it, is sufficiently supported by numerous authorities from the best writers, chiefly for the last two hundred years. Thomas Hoccleve, however, about the year 1450, has "*his owne self*." You will see what Wallis,



Lowth and Johnson, say on this subject ; and may consult Tyrwhitt, if you have his *Chaucer*, on the other side. There is likewise an obsolete adjective *self*, which I have, at present, nothing to do with. *Vide Shak. passim.*

You will have the goodness to send me, by the first opportunity, as many copies as you have recovered of *The Northumberland garland*. I never knew any thing more infamously knavish than the conduct of these people : who, or what, the devil are they ? Can not you, also, recover the block, which, you see, has cost me six and twenty shillings ?

“ What then ? ” Why, then, *Donau* or *Danaw* is, simply, *Don-water*, or *Don-river*. Q. E. D.—Is it not a conclusive argument that, wherever you find, in one country, the names of rivers and mountains which occur in another, both countries have, at some period, been inhabited by one and the same people. You have a *Don* in Yorkshire, in Scotland, in Germany, and in Russia. “ Think of that, master Brook.”

*Tervagant*, you should recollect, is a word of (at least) five or six hundred years standing, and *Termagant*, comparatively, the child of yesterday. It is certainly an English alteration, if not corruption, of the French term. But I must endeavour

to get some higher authority. In the mean time, I, in my turn, must crave leave to deny your right to *put down* an ancient orthography in favour of a modern one: though I admit the probability of the *m* and *v* being convertible letters either in the Gothick, or in the Celtick, or in both.

As you sometimes go into the episcopal library, you will take the trouble to look into the MS. (num. 11. 17. of your catalogue) in which is an ancient French metrical romance intitled *D'anseys de Cartaigne*; and to copy the first line; which you may afterward, at your leisure and convenience, communicate to

Your sincere friend,

J. RITSON.

P. S. I congratulate you on your migration to a place of greater security: may it preserve you safe and sound till the last stone of the abbey is crumbled into dust!

---

## CLXI.

TO MR. WALKER.

DEAR SIR,        Grays Inn, 18th February, 1797.

I have purchased for you, out of Paynes catalogue, the *Cento novelle antiche*, 1572, price 1l. 1s. This, as you most likely know, is a collection much esteemed by the Italians, of whom many suppose it to be anterior to the *Decamerone*. It was first published by Gualteruzzi in 1525; but the author (usually called *Il novelliero antico*) is unknown. You have it for half a guinea less than it appears to have cost the purchaser at Mr. Crofts's sale.

In the above catalogue is a copy of the *Morgante maggiore* (Firenze, 1732, 4to.) for 15s. tell me if I shall buy it:—also “*Novelle otto [rarissime, ri] stampate a spese de i signori conte de Clanbrassil, T. Stanley e W. Browne*” (only twenty-five copies printed), 8l. 8s. There are likewise several editions of the *Decamerone*, and two of *Bandello* (4l. 4s. and 5l. 5s., and (large paper) 10l. 10s.); together with “*Novella antica del Legnaiuolo*,” 1744, and “*Novelle di Grazzino*,”

1756 (one guinea each). Edwards's is not yet published.

I was probably too extravagant in my conjecture, as to the value of a complete collection of Italian *Novelle*. Instead of saying that a hundred guineas would go "a very little way," it would have been nearer the truth, I believe, to have said that such a sum would not be *more than sufficient*. By the price-list of Mr. Crofts's sale, (whose collection, at the same time, was far from perfect, though it contained several duplicates,) I find that the produce of this particular class was 99*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.*; not half the price, I take it, which so fine a set of books would fetch at this moment.

I have at length been favoured with a copy of Derrickes "Image of Ireland," (of which I some-time ago sent you the title,) and have made several long extracts, which shall be forwarded, with the books, in a parcel from Johnson's; unless you can hit upon some more expeditious mean of conveyance.

Mr. Bindley, of the Stamp-office, has the album of a German, who appears to have been shipwrecked upon the coast of Ireland, and has given a few drawings of scenery and manners in that country; one of which represents an Irishman warming his 'breech' before a fire; another,

horses drawing a plough, to which they are fastened by the tail.

In Drydens "Nymphidia," written about 1610, among other forms of adjuration, are the following;

" By the mandrakes dreadful groans;  
By the *Lubricans* sad moans."

The second line has hitherto puzzled every person who has been consulted : but, as it is said that the word *Lubricon* or *Lippercon*, is well known, in Ireland, as the name of some sort of fairy or spirit, perhaps you will be able to give a satisfactory explanation of this difficult passage : "*Et eris mihi magnus Apollo.*"

I am sorry to say that I know nothing of the edition of Italian plays, mentioned in your favour of the 12th of December. You do not seem certain that it was printed here ; and very little Italian literature is imported.

It seems rather extraordinary that your academy should employ Mr. Lynch to translate what has been already translated by Mr. O'Flanagan. Perhaps, indeed, you mean different annals. But, I fear, at this rate, we are likely to see none of them.

I return you many thanks for Mr. Boyds new poems, and the proposals for the O'Conors memoirs. I do not much admire the political intemperance, or religious zeal, which threatens to

pervade the latter : but shall be, nevertheless, glad, on other accounts, to become a subscriber.

I remain very sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

---

## CLXII.

## TO THE EDITOR.

Will you be so good as to enquire, at some of the shops (in York), for an edition of lord Fairfaxes *Memorials*, printed, a few years ago, by Binns of Leeds ?

Permit me, before I answer your question, to propose one of my own : “ By what law, or upon what principle, and by what process, (admitting the fact) is a man, who never existed, punished for sheep-stealing ? ”

As, it appears to me, your pecuniary property, and legal knowledge, will, by the end of your clerkship, be equally considerable, it may be worth while for you to employ the remainder of the term in studious speculations how to dispose of both to the best advantage. For my part, I confess myself utterly unable to advise you in so momentous a concern ; not pretending to be gifted with the spirit of prophecy, which seems necessary in order

to become acquainted with your actual situation and connections in September 1798. However, it might not be amiss, if, in the mean time, you endeavoured to give a little more satisfaction to your employers than, as I am made to understand, they have hitherto experienced : if, in short, not so much on their account as on your own, you paid that attention to the business of a great office which can, alone, enable you to conduct that of a small one : and, still more, if you would strive to find in judge Blackstone the amusement you seem to hope for from Don Quixote.

With respect to your health, I suppose it probable, that you would receive some benefit from the Harrowgate waters ; if, as I do not doubt, you could have leave of absence, for a week or two, in the proper season.

The reason of my wishing to restore the *k* to such words as *music*, *physic*, &c. which, you know, have only been deprived of it (and that not universally) within these few years, is for the sake of consistency. It appears from Walkers (Rhyming) Dictionary that as many words (to the amount, I suppose, of some hundreds) still continue to end in *ck* as have been made to end in *c* ; and, as the privation cannot possibly be applied to the former list, I conclude it will be the best

method not to apply it to the latter. There may be some exceptions, as no rule is without them : but your question should have been, not why the *k* is to be preserved in such or such words, but why it came to be rejected from them.

You may have perceived, by the London papers, that Godwin is about to publish a collection of Essays, under the title of "The enquirer" (a very unhappy one, in my opinion). It has not yet appeared, but, I am told, and do not, in the least, doubt, that several subjects are treated with uncommon spirit and ability, and will prove particularly interesting. I understand one of his topicks to be that the English language has *kept moving*, or, in other words, been in a progressive state of improvement, since the time of queen Elizabeth ; and, of course, I presume, that he and Holcroft write with more elegance and propriety than Addison or Swift. Health and judgement ! *Mens sana in corpore sano.*

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 18th February, 1797.

---



## CLXIII.

## TO THE SAME.

I have examined two or three editions of Don Quixote in Spanish, none of which seemed likely to meet your approbation : but I shall attend, for the purpose, to every catalogue that comes into my hands. At the same time I must needs think, if you want to learn the language, you would act very absurdly in beginning with a book as difficult as Shakspeare or Rabelais : but that, you'll say, is none of my business.

Though it is pretty certain that the modern *lions* of the English arms were anciently *leopards*, the fact, by no means, justifies Voltaire, in supposing them to be so now. Ariosto, to be sure, was at liberty to say any thing. The French *lillys* are said to have been originally *toads*.

I neither have read, nor have any inclination to read, Godwins essays ; though I have no doubt that the work has merit. . . . I suppose I might call " The *enquirer* " an unhappy title, from the authors having already published " An *enquiry* : " perhaps, however, you, who have perused the book, may find the name sufficiently apposite to

justify the repetition. It would seem as if one was always to be enquiring, without ever coming to a conclusion. . . . You have heard, by the way, that he is lately married to Mary (*alias* Mistress) Wolstonecraft, according to the rites and ceremonies of the church of England, which he was supposed to hold in the utmost detestation or contempt. His *cara sposa*, it seems, had been deceived by trusting to the honour or philosophy of one hackney author already. . . .

Impeys "Office of sheriff" may, for any thing I know, be the best book of the kind that has been hitherto published. To be sure the author is a coxcomical blockhead; but as he was for many years in the sheriffs office, he ought to know something of the matter. Health and intellect!

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 10th June, 1797.

---

CLXIV.

TO MR. WALKER.

DEAR SIR,

Grays Inn, 7th July, 1797.

On the 4th instant I received of Mr. Carey the sum of 3*l.* 5*s.* 6*d.*, being the balance of the

inclosed account. I am sorry that it proves so inconsiderable ; in other words, that I was not more successful in the execution of your commissions. It is expected that Edwards, who has been two or three years upon the continent, will display a capital collection of foreign books in the course of the ensuing winter ; among which it will be singularly hard if we do not meet with some of the desiderata in your list.

The library of Herbert Croft (author of " Love and Madness," &c.) is just now selling off by auction : but it seems to contain little or nothing in your way ; nor, in fact, of much rarity or value, in any other.

There are no materials, I am persuaded, to enable any one to discuss the subjects you propose. We are very imperfectly acquainted with the minutiae of the ancient stage, and not likely, I fear, to obtain much additional information. So far, however, as I am capable of forming an opinion, I am thoroughly satisfied, not only that the choruses of the old English drama were never sung, but that even the common songs, which more frequently occur, received no instrumental accompaniment, of which, I take it, the orchestra of that period was utterly incapable. The choruses of Shakspeare have never, that I can learn, been pronounced upon the stage since the restoration.

All the order-books and other documents belonging to this society were destroyed by fire toward the beginning of the present century : but it is not probable, I think, that they would have furnished any particulars relative to the dramatic performances of the students. Dugdale, who seems to have examined them with great attention, does not afford us a syllable upon that subject.

It may be to your purpose, at the same time, to know that the songs in Middletons *Witch*, which appear also to have been introduced in *Macbeth*, beginning, " Hecate, Hecate, come away," and " Black spirits and white," have (as I am informed) been lately discovered in MS. with the complete harmony, as performed at the original representation of those plays. You will find the words in a note to the late editions of Shakspeare ; and I shall, probably, one of these days, obtain a sight of the musick.

Your other enquiries will receive due attention as opportunity offers. In the mean time, I remain,

Dear Sir,

Very sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

P. S. I have little doubt that Sir W. Davenant was the first theatrical manager who had the voice accompanied with instruments,

## CLXV.

TO MR. HARRISON.

Grays Inn, 24th August, 1797.

MY WORTHY AND RESPECTED FRIEND.

There is no person in the world with whom I could pass either days or weeks more to my satisfaction than yourself. You will, therefore, do me the justice to believe that it is not from a want of inclination that I do not instantly avail myself of your obliging offer.

I am much indebted both to you and to Mr. Potter for the trouble you have taken in recovering the few remaining copies of my *Northumberland garland*, which, however, are all cut and spoiled. I am still better pleased that you have got the block, as it will enable me, some day or other to print a new and improved edition. I have been lately favoured with a few additional articles, of which I think the two following have merit :

“ There's three bonny laddies live at the Cra'-ha',  
There's Mickey, an' Mattey, an' Tommy, an' a'.  
It's weary shearing at the Cra'-ha',  
The days are sae lang, an' the wages sae sma'.”

“ Hartley an' Hallowell, a' ya' bonnie lassie,  
Fair Seaton-Delaval, a' ya':  
Earsdon stands on a hill, a' ya',  
Near to the Billy-mill, a' ya'.”

This is what you may call a topographical song.—How do ye like it?

I am very sorry to have given the Newcastle master any cause to complain of my behaviour: but I suppose the fault was rather want of attention than want of civility;—and it may be some extenuation that I had a person with me at breakfast, and was in the midst of it when he called. However, I heartily beg his pardon, and shall be always ready to make any atonement in my power.

As for the young gentleman who brought your letter, I have had no opportunity of behaving better to him; as it was left in my absence, and I have never seen him.

You once asked me what could be the meaning of *Kerlie-merlie*, in the epitaph of a London citizen of Henry the 6ths time, which you had met with in Stow. (“Kerlie merlie my wordes were- tho.”) Reading lately Fynes Morysons account of the Germans, I find that “when they are extraordinarily merry, they use a kind of garaussing, called *Kurle murle buff*, wherein they use certaine touches of the glasse, the beard, some parts of the body, and of the table, together with certaine whistlings, and philippings of the fingers, with like rules, so curiously disposed in

order, as it is a labour of Hercules to observe them. Yet he that erres in the least point of ceremony must drinke the cup of againe for penalty." The origin or sense of the phrase is therefore to be sought in the German glossaries, of which you are better provided than I am.

Is the word *Kirtle* ever used in the north, and what is its precise meaning?

*Unde Framwellgate?*—It is, at any rate, a corrupt orthography, and has nothing to do with a *well*. Leland, I observe, calls it *Framagate*, and mentions a street of the same name at Kendal. Now will you have my conjecture? for a fools bolt, they say, is soon shot. It should be written *Framengate* (as it is in one place by Leland,) and was, originally, a street set apart for the habitation of foreigners, or persons not intitled to the franchise of the city: from *Frem* or *Fremð alienus, extraneus*. It was certainly a custom, in ancient times, for people of the same description to reside together, as the Jews do, in most places to this day: and hence your *Bondgate*, in Darlington, Auckland, &c. You may overturn this fine system if you can.

As you have, doubtless, made good progress in the Danish language, I have transcribed for, and inclose you an ancient ballad in that tongue

several hundred years old ; which you may translate and verify at your leisure.

I understand you are become quite patriarchal, and have got a beard as long as Martin Vanbutchels. That every hair in it may add a year to your life is the sincere wish of

Your ever faithful

J. RITSON.

---

## CLXVI.

To MR. ROWNTREE.

Grays Inn, 13th December, 1797.

DEAR ROWNTREE,

It is a little extraordinary that both Wilson and myself should be indebted for the knowledge of Henry C——s death to your letter. It had been mentioned, I understand, in some paper which neither of us had seen, and whence, perhaps, it has got into this days Morning-post ; but has, certainly, all the appearance of being kept an intentional secret ; which might lead one to suspect it had been produced by an act of violence. If he have not altered the disposition he made three or four years ago, Tom (who is said to be ill in



Yorkshire) will be entitled to the remains of his property, charged, however, with a considerable debt, and subject to some annuities: so that it will require very good management, as well as rigid œconomy, to keep it together.

Wilson was appointed receiver of the C—— estate upon its mortgage to Sir William Scott, but has never acted: and whether he will be concerned for Tom is yet unknown. If I am at all consulted, or have any opportunity of throwing in an opinion, I shall certainly recommend the above estate to be put under your management, not so much, indeed, out of compliment or friendship to you, as because I am thoroughly persuaded that C—— cannot possibly adopt a measure more conducive to his own interest and advantage. I have already secured Wilson.

If the scoundrels you allude to were the only sufferers by the proposed taxes, one would not be sorry to see them centupled. Why, don't the rascals come forward with their "lives and fortunes"—Give Pitt their money, that is, and hang themselves? Apropos; you will perceive by this mornings paper that the city-meeting yesterday has given him the staggers. It seems probable, therefore, that he will be obliged to

change his plan ; and it is certain that he is very much embarrassed.

Wear has made me a present of two Thornaby cheeses, which do not, indeed, eat well either cold or toasted, but, he assures me, will stew excellently. I shall, of course, feel myself much obliged to you for the proper utensil in that behalf, which is not, so far as I can find, to be had here. You may bring it up with you ; and do not, at the same time, forget my books. Give my compliments to Wadeson ; and believe me, always,

Sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

---

## CLXVII.

### TO THE EDITOR.

I send you the two books of wills, which you will return me when you have done with them. Bacons Abridgement is a very valuable and useful work, and seems more proper for you, at present, than Comynses Digest. A new and improved edition has been recently published, of which, in a few days, I shall desire Butterworth to send you a copy. You should read Cromptons

practice, or other publications of that nature, which, I believe, are numerous, though they are rather out of my way.

It is not true that the French write *letre* ; nor, if they did, would your capricious orthography (*leter*) be a bit the less unjustifiable. The Romans always wrote *littera*, as it is in the best editions of the classicks. *Leter* is (not an epistle, but) *one who lets*. I am persuaded, however, that *leter* is right ; but the principle of the distinction depends upon the etymology of the word ; of which you do not seem to be aware. Do you mean that your new-fangled *leter* should have the same pronunciation with the proper name *Peter* ? If not, the double *t* is essentially necessary. I have got a dictionary here which would teach you to spell.

I think your friend has given the true sense of the Spanish phrase you mention. Shelton, I see, renders it : " Neither were it good you should understand him."

I have no Portuguese grammar at present. I conceive the language to be little or nothing more than a dialect of the Spanish : as, if I be not mistaken, the natives of either country, speaking their own idiom, are perfectly intelligible to those of the other ; which is the criterion of dialect.

I should have written a longer *leter*, if I had not been unwell. I am afraid the world has not to improve much in my time : in the mean while I am rapidly declining both in body and mind ; and heartily wish you may enjoy better health and meet with more success than I have done.

J. R.

G. I. 3d February, 1798.

P. S. Godwin has published *Memoirs* of his late wife, which will be worth reading.

---

### CLXVIII.

#### TO THE SAME.

As I do not perfectly understand upon what terms you are at present with Mr. Wolley, it is very difficult, or rather absolutely impossible, for me to conceive the most proper line of conduct which you should adopt. If, however, you be of as much consequence to him as you insinuate I should naturally conclude that his own interest would induce him to make some proposal, which you will consider whether it be yours to adopt. If not, I think you will do right to turn your thoughts toward some other situation or connection. York, it seems, in case of a separation

from Mr. Wolley, affords no prospect of a satisfactory establishment ; which you must, of course, look out for in some other place. Rowntree, no doubt, is a good judge of the superior advantages of Darlington, compared, that is, with the neighbouring country : but you might do well, in the mean time, to enquire into the state of Halifax, Wakefield, and other populous towns in Yorkshire, of which I have always had a much better opinion.

I never heard Rowntree mention even the name of Mr. Chaloner : but he once said that he had some thoughts of offering you terms to come to Stockton. It does not, however, appear that Wadeson was any way authorised to give you such an invitation ; and, indeed, if Rowntree were in earnest, he would write to you himself. Your letters to Wadeson are very proper, whether with Rowntrees privity or not.

It is my own fault, I must confess, that you have not already received the books you speak of. The reason is that I owe Butterworth a bill, which should be discharged before I give him any further orders ; and this, I flatter myself, will be done in the course of the present month.

My complaint is neither a fever nor a consumption : but it renders my existence miserable, and

I have no hope of getting the better of it. As, at the same time, I can eat and drink and walk about, it would be difficult to convince "Sleek-headed men and such as *sleep o' nights*," that any thing is the matter with me: and, indeed, it is a subject upon which I do not like to explain myself; and wish nobody to enquire after. I am apprehensive of an entire loss of memory; as I am daily forgetting the most common words in the language: and you would be surprised to learn the trouble and vexation which this foolish letter has cost me. Health and friendship!

G. I. 5th April 1798.

---

## CLXIX.

TO THE SAME.

So far as I am capable of judging in a sort of business with which I am totally unacquainted, Mr. Rowntree's proposals are both fair and friendly, and such as it seems your interest to accept. ....The power of dissolution seems perfectly reasonable: three years will afford a very fair trial; and perhaps, at the end of that period, you may feel yourself intitled to better terms; or if, on the other hand, you are good for nothing, it

would be very unjust that he should be any longer incumbered with you. This sort of connection, like all others, should be governed entirely by the mutual interest of the parties : and I have no doubt that it will be Mr. Rowntrees and your own to continue together to the end of the five years : if, that is, the profession of an attorney exist so long, of which I have some doubt. In the mean time, you will do well to follow your worthy partners example ; that is to get and save as much as you can ; in order to enable yourself afterwards to live, with œconomy, in ease and independence.

You must be content, for the present, to lay most of your peculiarities upon the shelf : you make a *g* like a *p* which is abominable. Avoid as much as possible all appearance of singularity or affectation, and while you are a man of business endeavour to be nothing else : I have learned the value of this piece of advice by dear-bought experience ; and experience generally both costs too much and comes too late to be of service to the purchaser. Health and success !

Grays Inn, 16th April, 1798.

J. RITSON,

---

## CLXX.

TO MR. WALKER.

Grays Inn, 9th November, 1798.

DEAR SIR,

Along with your favour of the 21st of October, I received the Irish grammar, for which I return my best and sincerest thanks. I was much concerned to read of your indisposition, and I hope you are before this perfectly recovered.

The passage in Voltaires dictionary to which I took the liberty of referring you is in substance as follows: Having observed it to be highly probable that the Melopoea regarded by Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, as an essential part of tragedy, was an even and simple chant, like that of *the preface to the mass*, which, in his opinion, is the Gregorian chant, and not the Ambrosian, but which at any rate, is a true Melopoea, he adds, that when the Italians revived tragedy in the 16th century, the recitation was a Melopoea, but which could not be noted; for who, he asks, can note inflexions of the voice which are 18ths or 16ths of tone? they were learned by heart. This usage was received in France, when the French began to form a theatre above a century after the Italians. The *Sophonisba* of Mairet was chanted



like that of Trissino, but more rudely. All the parts of the actors, and more especially of the actresses, were noted *memoriter* by tradition. Mademoiselle Beauval, an actress of the time of Corneille, &c. recited to him, upward of 60 years before he wrote this article, the beginning of the part of *Emilie* in *Cinna*, such as it had been delivered in the first representations by Beaupré. This Melopoea, it seems, resembled the declamation of the present day much less than the modern recitation of the French resembles their manner of reading the gazette. The theatrical melopoea, he concludes, perished with the actress Duclos, who, having no other merit than a fine voice, without spirit and feeling, rendered at last ridiculous that which had been admired in Des Oeuillets, and in Champmêlé. (*Dictionnaire philosophique*, Chant, Musique : *Œuvres*, Deux-ponts, 1792, tome 55.)

In the life of St. Columba, written by Adomnan, about the year 680, (cap. xliii.) it is related that as the saint sat one day with his brethren by the lake *Cei*, near the mouth of the river which is called in Latin *bos* (in Irish *Bo*), a certain Scottish (Irish) poet came up to them; and when, after some conversation, he had departed, the brethren said to the saint, "Why, on *Cronans* returning from us, hast thou not required some song; to be

sung in measure (*modulabiliter*), after the manner of his art?" To whom the saint, "And why do you utter such useless words? How could I require a song of joy from that wretched fellow, who now about to be killed by his enemies, quickly approaches the end of his life." These words said by the saint, and behold on the other side of the river a man cries out, saying, "That poet who lately returned from you safe and sound, within this hour was killed by enemies on his way."

In the life of St. Kentigern, by Josceline, a monk of Furness, about 1180, we have an account of a *joculator* or minstrel, "*officii sui peritus et expeditus*," who is sent by a certain king of Ireland to the court of Rederech king of Cambria (or Strath-Cluyd), to ascertain if the report of that monarch's liberality, politeness and 'munificence' were well-founded. Being admitted into the palace, he played upon the *tympanum et cithara*; and rejoiced the king and his courtiers all the Christmas holidays. The king commands that he should be offered rewards suitable to the royal magnificence; all which the *hystrio* rejects, saying that he could have a sufficiency of such things in his own country: and when required by the king to name what he would accept, he answered that he had no need of gold or silver,

garments or horses, *with which Ireland abounded* : " but," says he, " if you wish that I should leave you remunerated, give me a dish full of ripe mulberries." This request, which appeared sufficiently ridiculous to the bystanders, was not very easy to be complied with in the depth of winter : however, god, at the instance of St. Kentigern, enables the king to produce the mulberries ; and the astonished minstrel, determined to remain in his service, after some time renounces his profession, and turns monk or hermit. (Cap. xxxvii.) This was in the sixth century. How far these stories are to your purpose I presume not to determine : but should you wish for the original text I will very gladly transcribe it. I can, likewise, easily procure the volume of Voltaire, from which I made my quotation, should you desire the exact words.

I understood, about a twelvemonth since, from Mr. Steevens, that a new edition of his Shakespeare was then in contemplation ; but as I have heard no more upon the subject, I presume that the complexion of the times is not deemed by the booksellers sufficiently favourable to such a speculation.

I am, Dear Sir,

Most respectfully and sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

## CLXXI.

## TO THE EDITOR.

I inclose you a five-pound note on account of your half-years dividend due the 5th instant. The books are yet unsold, though I expect to hear of an auction, which shall comprehend them, every day.

I shall be glad to learn that you are comfortably settled, and every way satisfied with your situation and prospects.

Remember me to Rowntree, and do not forget to send me the French books I lent him by the first opportunity. Perhaps, indeed, he means to be up next term, when he may bring them with him.

It is somewhat remarkable and even ludicrous that the first victim of the infamous act you told me of, and which I could scarcely believe government so absurdly diabolical as to have passed, should be one of its own creatures—a Lord Camelford, second cousin to Mr. Pitt, and brother-in-law to my lord Grenville, who, it is said, if he should be hanged or beheaded, will come in for 20,000 a year. In fact, he ought to have been executed long ago for the murder of an

officer in the West Indies. He was now going to assassinate the directory.

This severe frost puts an entire stop to all our political Machiavels hopeful negotiations on the continent. No letters or messages, in spite of several abortive attempts, can be either sent or received; a circumstance, it would seem, of no small disappointment, mortification and perplexity. In the mean time things appear to be going on very well in other quarters; so that at the long run we may reasonably expect a pretty good account of the whole.

Grays Inn,  
16th January, 1799.

J. RITSON.

---

CLXXII.

TO MR. WALKER.

DEAR SIR,

Grays Inn, 22d Feb. 1799.

I am perfectly conscious that I make a very inadequate and ungrateful return to the numerous favours conferred by your friendship and attention: but the cause of my apparent neglect is, in fact, so distressing to myself, as to render me an object of your commiseration, rather than of your resentment.

The "Memoir on Italian tragedy," for which, beside the general obligation I feel in common with all the lovers of literature, I have to thank you, in particular, as a valuable present, has confirmed the expectations of your friends, no less than it has gratified their wishes. Some of your readers, it is possible, may not be deeply impressed with the interest or importance of the subject; but all must admire the ease, elegance and vivacity with which it has been treated. As to the reviewers, their petulance and malignity are too notorious and contemptible to give you a moments concern. Your recompence is the pleasure and praise of the liberal and the candid.

I am afraid that the opinion of Shakspeares having been acquainted with no language but his own is too generally received, and too firmly established to be shaken even by your very ingenious observations. The incident of the nightingale was, perhaps, sufficiently natural to two poets, in the description of a night-scene, without its being necessarily conclusive that one was indebted to the other. Dr. Johnsons remark I conceive to be particularly puerile and absurd: since it supposes that Shakspeare was confined in the selection or management of his plot to what was already known to his auditories; which is, in many respects, notoriously false.

The ordinary practice of the Italian novelists, in borrowing their subjects from one another, serves to convince me that Groto was altogether indebted to Da Porto. Nevertheless, the positive assurance, either of this writer, or of Bandello, who copied him, as to the historical 'facts' upon which their novels are founded, will not deceive a cautious reader, who cannot fail to recollect often similar assertions are proved the mere sport of imagination. For my own part, I am thoroughly persuaded that no such circumstances as those in the story of Romeo and Juliet ever actually happened either at Verona or elsewhere. If Da Porto, as is highly probable, were himself its original author, I have not the least doubt that he drew his principal incidents from Xenophons Ephesian history (which though not printed in his time, existed in MS. at Florence), and, possibly also, from the 33d novel of Masuccio Salernitano.

The queen of Navarres novels, I meant before to observe, were originally published by Pierre Boastuau in 1558. The first edition, by Gruget, was in 1559. But, though the *Novelle di Bandello* were already printed, one cannot be sure that he had not met with a copy of the *Heptameron* in manuscript. However, the fact may be as he

says. Her majesty, I conclude, was indebted for the ground-work, at least, of the story in question, either to Masuccio, *Novella* 23, to the *Gesta Romanorum*, *caput* 13, or to Vincentius Bellovacensis, *Speculum historiale*, liber 8, *caput* 93. It is very singular that Mr. Walpole should not have known that it had repeatedly appeared in English, and twice or thrice in his own lifetime. I suspect, indeed, that the *Gesta Romanorum* was the queens authority, as she has drawn other subjects from the same source: one of which is the novel of the lady who is made to drink out of her lovers scull. This has been worked up into a modern German ballad.

I will make it my business to enquire for the books you mention: but most of the principal booksellers decline publishing a catalogue this winter.

Permit me to ask if your friend Mr. Boyd be a native of *Ireland* or of *Scotland*.

I remain, with sincerity and respect,

Your much obliged

and very faithful humble servant,

J. RITSON.

P. S. Your letters were safely delivered to Mr. Flaxman and Dr. Aikin. The formers address is No. 7, Buckingham-Street Fitzroy-Square; the latters, No. 4, Broad-street-buildings.



## CLXXIII.

TO MR. WALKER.

DEAR SIR,

Grays Inn, 9th May, 1799.

At a late sale of books I purchased two lots, from the Pinelli-library, consisting of the following articles (all in quarto) :

1. Archadio, libro pastorale, 'di' Sannazaro.  
Milano, 1504.
2. I tre tiranni, comedia, di Ricchi.  
Vinegia, 1533.
3. Comedie (tre) di Contile. Milano, 1550.
4. Antigono, tragedia, del C. di Monte-Vicentino.  
Venetia, 1565.
5. Delia, tragedia de pastori, da Cicogna.  
Vicenza, 1593.
6. Antiloc, tragi comedia, di Leoni.  
Ferrara, 1594.
7. Hidalba, tragedia, di Veniero. Venetia, 1596.
8. Canace, tragedia, di Sperone. Ibi 1597.
9. La Taide convertita, rappresentatione spirituale, di Leoni Crocifero. Ibi 1599.
10. Merope, tragedia, di Torelli. Parma, 1605.
11. Giustina, tragedia, di Cortese.  
Vicenza, 1607.

12. I martirii di Santa Christina, devota rappresentatione, da Da Fano. Fano, 1612.
13. Alvida, tragedia, di Cortone. Padoa, 1615.
14. Solimano, tragedia, di Bonarelli.  
Firenze, 1620.
15. Gerusalemme cattiva, tragedia, di Campelli.  
Venetia, 1623.
16. Le ammazzoni, tragedia, tradotta dal Sig. Gozzi.  
Ibi 1756.

all or any of which are at your service. The price was 20s. which could not, I thought, be too much for 16 volumes. The *Canace*, I observe, is not the edition you wish for, which it may be very difficult to procure. In the same sale was a curious collection of ancient Italian mysteries, (*Rappresentazione sacre*), likewise from the Pinelli library, upon which I should have been glad to know what value you set. They were bought in, I suspect, for the proprietor (Holcroft) at 4 guineas or thereabout.

Those who deny the learning of Shakspeare must own themselves at a loss to account for the way in which he came by the stories of *Othello*, *Cymbeline* and *The Merchant of Venice*, which are all from Italian novels, whereof no translation is known to have been extant at the time he wrote. I suspect, however, that, in

believing his works to be "sprinkled with Italian words and Italian ideas," you refer to some plays (the *Taming of the Shrew*, for instance), of which, it is highly probable, he was not the original author. His knowledge of Latin has been attempted to be proved from the same performances. I doubt much, at the same time, whether you are altogether correct in asserting that "he spells his own name *thrice* differently on the same occasion." The fac-similes, from which you possibly draw your inference, are not to be implicitly relied on, and, at any rate, you will make some allowance for the imperfect vision or tremulous penmanship of a dying man.

Cardinals *cap*, I believe, is occasionally used for *hat* in ludicrous phraseology. It is, in fact, as you have doubtless observed, a *hat*, and not a *cap*. But if you only wanted authority, here is old Skelton :

"It is a wonders warke  
They shoote all at one marke  
At the cardinals *hat*,  
They shote all at that."

Again

"The *red hat* with his lure,  
Bringeth al things under cure."

You have nevertheless, a still more respectable one on your own side :

"Farewell nobility; let his grace go forward  
And dare us with his *cap*, like larks." (Hen. VIII.)

The author of *The first part of king Henry the sixth*, likewise has both *hat* and *cap*. So that, as Mr. Steevens somewhere observes, "the matter is involved in much and painful uncertainty." "With this view," says Coxe, in his *Memoirs of Sir Robert Walpole*, "lord Harrington applied to the emperor for his interest to obtain for him a cardinals *hat*." (I, 443.)

I am not aware that the 9th volume of the *Spectator* has ever been intentionally suppressed. It is not by the authors of the preceding volumes, nor of the least value in any other respect.

It is very true that I have made a collection of titles of old romances; which, however, I shall never live to publish, nor, in fact, have ability to complete. You forget, perhaps, that I am already indebted to you for some valuable communications from Mr. Quin: but I shall certainly feel myself still more obliged by any additional information. It may save you trouble, at the same time, to be told that I stop, in the French Italian, and Spanish departments, at the year 1600, and, in the English one, at 1660.

You need not give yourself the trouble, of returning the extracts from *Derricks Image of Ireland*. We have a copy of it, I find, in the British museum.

Mr. (something) Morris, the author of the *Essay on the character of Falstaff*, is, I take it, still living, or was so very lately. He was private secretary, if I mistake not, to the marquis of Lansdowne (then lord Shelburne), and is, I believe, a native of Ireland: but has not, to my knowledge, published any thing beside. When he read over his MS. to Tom Davies the bookseller, he was as much diverted as any of his readers have been; interrupting the lecture by repeated bursts of laughter.

*The British critic* has reviewed your *Memoir* in a very favorable manner, considering the general insolence and malignity which characterise that partial publication. Your politicks, it seems, have passed muster, as well as your talents. A united Irishman, or Anti-Unionist, with (if possible) still greater genius and merit, would have been consigned, without ceremony, to everlasting damnation.

Though I am persuaded that the origin of my complaint is an affection of the nervous system, the immediate cause is a continued want of sleep and rest, which distresses me in a very singular manner, and threatens, in a short time, a total privation of memory. For this, I fear, the medicine you are so kind as to recommend would

afford no relief, any more than a great many others which I have been induced to experience.

We are in anxious and momentary expectation of news from the French fleet, which is thought to be destined for the invasion of Ireland. There is no danger, however, I take it for granted, of your part of the country being the seat of war.

With my best wishes for your health and happiness, I remain,

Dear Sir,

Your very sincere friend,

and humble servant,

J. RITSON.

---

## CLXXIV.

### TO THE EDITOR.

If Paul Garret be able to raise a little money, I think he may venture to revive the judgement, upon which there really appears to be due what must be, to a poor man, a very considerable sum. This proceeding will probably intimidate the representatives of Stevenson, and induce them to accommodate the business : but I cannot advise him to bring the question before a jury, as it is possible that length of time or other circumstances

might lead them to presume a satisfaction of the debt. It will be very easy to discover whether the judgement were actually revived in 1787, and this fact should be ascertained before any further steps are taken.

I shall endeavour to procure you Johnsons *Dictionary* and Hickeses *Thesaurus*. The *Verbal index* you speak of is neither published, nor likely to be published. The compiler (Francis Twiss) requires no less than 500 subscribers, at two guineas each, and has not yet obtained a fifth part of the number . . . . .

All your books, except *Les trois imposteurs*, have been sold by auction, but I am not yet informed of the produce. The excepted article, which prejudice or ignorance prevented from being inserted in the catalogue, was to be disposed of in some other way.

Not only your present dividend, but part of the next, will be swallowed up by the books you have ordered; in addition to which I shall have to charge you 10s. 6d. on account of Bacons *Abridgement*, for which I only debited you five guineas.

Health and prosperity!

Grays Inn, 13th July, 1799.

J. RITSON.

## CLXXV.

## TO THE SAME.

I inclose you a five pound bank note, on account of your half-yearly dividend, due to the 5th instant. You must wait for the books you want till you are certain of being able to spare the money to pay for them. As to my copy of Hickses *Thesaurus*, I do not recollect that I ever offered to let you have it at five guineas; and have, at present, no inclination to part with it; unless, indeed, I could meet with a small paper copy to my mind; which I may not find an easy matter.

I am sorry that you have had any altercation with the commissioners of income, whose conduct, nevertheless, I can believe to have been every way illiberal and impertinent, and, were you in a state of independency, would have been properly resented by your letter, which does not, under your present circumstances, appear perfectly judicious. You do not, at the same time, enable me to judge of the question, by withholding your original return, with which it is possible, the commissioners might have some reason to be dissatisfied.



I was myself under the necessity of preferring an appeal against the assessment of the commissioners for this society, in which I partly succeeded. . . .

Your objection to a verbal index to Shakspeare reminds me of the fox in the fable, who accused the grapes, he could not reach, of acidity. If such a work would answer no useful purpose, why should you desire it to be sent to you? or how can you imagine it would meet with encouragement? The only exception to it is, that it refers particularly to an obsolete edition, instead of accompanying a new one. I have long intended to prepare one myself; though the proposed editor says he has been twenty years about it. Adieu.

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 23d July, 1799.

---

## CLXXVI.

TO MR. HARRISON.

Imperious circumstances, combined with ill health, and low spirits, deprive me of the pleasure of paying a visit to my venerable and ever-honoured friend, in the course of the present

season: The next, I flatter myself, will prove more favourable to my wishes ; as I can propose no higher gratification than the passing of a few days under his hospitable roof.

I cannot pretend to guess at your present studies, or literary amusement ; to which I should be glad to contribute : though I am not sure that any thing has lately appeared which you would be at all anxious to be acquainted with. You did not, perhaps, sufficiently interest yourself in the existence of Troy, to care now to be told that Mr. Bryant (whose work you had) was answered by a Mr. Morritt of Yorkshire ; to whom, however, he has, at the age of 84, made a spirited reply. You, likewise, I believe, had Malones Inquiry into the spurious Shakspeare papers : but not, I think, Mr. Chalmerses " Apology for the believers ;" to which he has recently added a " Supplement" of equal bulk ; each forming a large octavo, at the price of 6s. or 7s. Can I learn if both or either of these publications, or any other, on a different subject, would prove acceptable ? The reigning taste of the times seems to be poetry, politics, and German plays.

Apropos, with respect to Homer : you take it for granted, I presume, along with the rest of the world, that he was the author of both the Iliad

and the Odyssey. Now I have been lately perusing those two poems (in Mr. Popes translation), and am satisfied, from the circumstance I am about to mention, that they could not possibly be written by the same person. In the latter, the goddess Venus is represented as the wife of Vulcan, who, in the former, has no sort of connection with her, being, in fact, the husband of a quite different female :

“ Charis, his spouse, a *grace* divinely fair,  
(With purple fillets *round* her braided hair) :”

an inconsistency which it is morally impossible for either Homer, or any other individual, to have fallen into : so that, as I said before, these two famous poems must have had so many different authors. Take down your Homer, and compare the passages ; and, I think, you will be of my opinion : if not, I have no more to say ; except that, with my best wishes for your health and happiness, I remain

your truly sincere and affectionate friend,

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, September 7th, 1799.

---

## CLXXVII.

## TO THE EDITOR.

Well, if I promised you my copy of the *Thesaurus*, at five guineas, I suppose I must be as good as my word: but my books and chambers are in such confusion at present, that you must be content to wait for it till a more convenient opportunity.

I bought a fine copy of Johnsons Dictionary (two volumes, folio, 1765), a few years ago, at Paynes, for five-and-thirty shillings. I therefore conclude that Mr. Harrisons copy of the first edition, in the condition you describe, may be worth a guinea; though I do not mean to say that a London bookseller would give so much for it.

Your Fields bible was sold, by Leigh and Sotheby for 4*s*. Your *Tableau des saints* (2 tomes) for 6*d*. and your *Platonisme dévoilée* for nothing. The *trois imposteurs*, which they declined selling, would have fetched a much better price than the bible. They promised to dispose of it privately. Egerton allows 1*l*. 7*s*. for Tyrwhitts Chaucer.

M. Marmet insisted on deducting one shilling on account of a torn leaf in the *Tableau de Paris*, and of a dirty one in the *Œuvres de Vadé*. I thought

it prudent to comply. You should not, however, make pencil-marks in other peoples books, or books which you do not mean to keep ; much less marginal corrections with ink, as you have done in my *Candide* . . .

I am much obliged by your present of cowslip-wine. I may have tasted better, but it is certainly drinkable. Brandy improves nothing, and is only a miserable apology for want of skill. They who best know how to manufacture this sort of wine, never make use of it.

Will Ayscoughs *Index to Shakspeare* answer your purpose? You may have mine for 18s. (prime cost). You may, likewise, find such a one as you seem to want, in the last edition of 1793. It was compiled by Isaac Reed.

Grays Inn, 8th October, 1799.

---

## CLXXVIII.

TO MR. WALKER.

DEAR SIR,                      Grays Inn, 18th October, 1799.

I was informed by major Ousely of the domestic affliction you had sustained, which I lament in common with all who have the pleasure of know-

ing you. It is, at the same time, some alleviation of your misfortune, that a literary collection so singular and valuable as the one you have formed has escaped the ravages of this all-devouring element.

Very few copies, I believe, of the *Parnaso Italiano* were ever imported into this country; and, of course, it would be almost a miracle to pick up the particular volume you want. However, my present want of success shall not deter me from further enquiry.

I should be glad to have *all* the numbers of the *Anthologia Hibernica*; having been hitherto unable to meet with any of them.

I believe I have already mentioned the intended edition and new biography of Allan Ramsay. They will be ornamented with a head of the poet, never yet engraved, from an original painting by his son.

Mr. Southey, the poet, proposes to publish the works of Chatterton, including the supposititious poems of Rowley, in two volumes, 8vo. with a new life by Dr. Gregory, the author of that in the late edition of the *Biographia Britannica*. He has, likewise, just published a volume of original miscellany poems, by himself and others, under the title of "The annual anthology, for 1799;" which he means to continue.

The magnificent library of Paul Benfield comes under the hammer in the beginning of next week. It is rich, I have been informed, in French and Italian books; which cost him, alone, 5000*l.* but there will be no opportunity of apprising you, in time, of the contents of the catalogue: though should there be any thing which I know would prove acceptable to you, I shall endeavour to secure it.

I am, dear Sir,  
Your very respectful and  
sincere friend and servant,  
J. RITSON.

---

## CLXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

DEAR SIR,                      Grays Inn, 27th Dec. 1799.

Your reference to Tiraboschi was inaccurate. There are sixteen volumes of his work in the British-museum, which I presume to be all that have been hitherto published; but the Italian drama is no where treated of. The *theatre* he speaks of is of a different nature. In T. xiv. L. i. c. 11. I find an account of the appointment of five professors in Milan by Lodovico Sforza in

1. The first part of the document  
describes the general situation  
of the country and the  
state of the economy.  
It also mentions the  
political situation and  
the role of the government.  
The second part of the document  
describes the social situation  
and the role of the people.  
It also mentions the  
cultural situation and  
the role of the arts.  
The third part of the document  
describes the economic situation  
and the role of the business  
community. It also mentions  
the financial situation and  
the role of the banks.  
The fourth part of the document  
describes the legal situation  
and the role of the courts.  
It also mentions the  
judicial system and  
the role of the judges.  
The fifth part of the document  
describes the educational situation  
and the role of the schools.  
It also mentions the  
university system and  
the role of the professors.  
The sixth part of the document  
describes the health situation  
and the role of the hospitals.  
It also mentions the  
medical profession and  
the role of the doctors.  
The seventh part of the document  
describes the military situation  
and the role of the army.  
It also mentions the  
navy and the role of the sailors.  
The eighth part of the document  
describes the foreign relations  
and the role of the diplomats.  
It also mentions the  
international community and  
the role of the nations.

2. The second part of the document  
describes the social situation  
and the role of the people.  
It also mentions the  
cultural situation and  
the role of the arts.  
The third part of the document  
describes the economic situation  
and the role of the business  
community. It also mentions  
the financial situation and  
the role of the banks.  
The fourth part of the document  
describes the legal situation  
and the role of the courts.  
It also mentions the  
judicial system and  
the role of the judges.  
The fifth part of the document  
describes the educational situation  
and the role of the schools.  
It also mentions the  
university system and  
the role of the professors.  
The sixth part of the document  
describes the health situation  
and the role of the hospitals.  
It also mentions the  
medical profession and  
the role of the doctors.  
The seventh part of the document  
describes the military situation  
and the role of the army.  
It also mentions the  
navy and the role of the sailors.  
The eighth part of the document  
describes the foreign relations  
and the role of the diplomats.  
It also mentions the  
international community and  
the role of the nations.



# LETTERS

Mr. Benfields sale turned  
 here were, in fact, a few Italian  
 the ancient drama, or others  
 Your opinion as to the imp  
 tion in the supper-scene in  
 "I cannot," says M  
 us Letters writt  
 "I cannot," sa  
 quo personatin  
 it should be th  
 ld discover the a  
 he should be no m  
 the pit than to the  
 ever, supposes a  
 means the charac  
 t is evident, from  
 the ghost to make  
 he has not, as on  
 part in the dialogue  
 new edition of Sh  
 on the 1st of the n  
 procrastinated by  
 which has been rat  
 I am, de  
 Most sincerely and

1472, and of the institution of the academy there by the same prince : and in T. xv, L. 2. c. 40, 47, of his introduction into that academy of the mathematical and musical chair. In another place, indeed (T. iv. L. 3. c. 11.) he says, " Aveva finalmente Milano ancora il suo teatro, e ne rimane ancor la memoria nel nome di una chiesa posta ove esso era anticamente, e detta perciò di S. Vittore al Teatro ; e quiridi si può probabilmente raccogliere, che i poetici studj vi fossero in fiore : " but this was in the third century, and is probably foreign to your purpose.

No catalogue of any consequence has been yet published ; but I have no doubt to procure you something or other in the course of the winter. I have made all the enquiry possible about the " catalogue of foreign books " you mention, and am assured that no such publication has ever appeared, or, at least, is at all known. It would have been very easy for your correspondent, if he had actually seen such a thing, to have given you, at the same time, the booksellers name.

If, as I suspect the Pinelli collection of *Rappresentatione sacre* were bought in by Holcroft, they must now be locked up in one of the chests he has left in the custody of particular friends. He is, at present, making the tour of Germany.

Mr. Benfields sale turned out an imposition. There were, in fact, a few Italian books, but nothing of the ancient drama, or otherwise rare and curious.

Your opinion as to the impropriety of the apparition in the supper-scene in *Macbeth* is not singular. "I cannot," says Meister, the author of some ingenious Letters written during a residence in England, "I cannot," says he, "see the propriety of Banquo personating the character of his own ghost; it should be through Macbeths fears that we should discover the apparition which haunts him, and he should be no more visible to the audience in the pit than to the guests at the banquet." This, however, supposes a refinement which was by no means the characteristic of Shakspeares age. It is evident, from the old editions, that he meant the ghost to make his actual appearance, though he has not, as on similar occasions, given him a part in the dialogue.

The new edition of Shakspeare was to go to press on the 1st of the new year; but, I fear, it will be procrastinated by Mr. Steevens's indisposition, which has been rather alarming.

I am, dear Sir,

Most sincerely and faithfully yours,

J. RITSON.

## CLXXX.

## TO THE EDITOR.

Inclosed you have a 5*l.* note on account of your dividend due the 5th of January. You will say it is rather late of *coming*, to which I answer, Better late than never. . . .

Your friend Stewart is just arrived from America, and as mad as ever. He now proposes a course of lectures upon mental capacity, or, in other words, to teach people to think; which he seems to flatter himself will be attended with success: I am of a different opinion.

Have you read Godwins novel, and what do you think of it?

J. RITSON.

17th February, 1800.

---

CLXXXI.

## TO THE SAME.

I should have sent you the inclosed sooner, had I not flattered myself with an expectation of delivering it in person, which, however, I am compelled to abandon.

To tell you the plain truth, I do not wish to part with my Hickeses *Thesaurus*, till, at least, I can suit myself with a copy I like as well. I still think you were mistaken in supposing that I offered it you for five guineas : but, if no other copy will satisfy you, you must be content to wait till I am dead.

I think your criticism upon Godwin much better founded than that upon myself. As I have referred to a particular authority, you should have consulted it before you charged me with the blunder of *infedele* for *infelice*. How it happened I cannot conceive, but there it is. I transcribed it without suspicion ; but you are certainly right.

I am at present, and have for sometime been, very much indisposed ; and it is this indisposition chiefly which prevents my coming into the north, and, in fact, going any where else.

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 30th August, 1800.

---

## CLXXXII.

TO DAVID MACPHERSON, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,

Your obliging and satisfactory answers to my former enquiries induce me to trouble you with the following, upon which I shall be happy to have your judicious opinion.

Did you ever meet with the name of *Bethoc* (the daughter of Malcolm Mac-Kenneth) in the Irish character or orthography; or elsewhere, in short, 'than' in the old list published by Innes?

What is the meaning of "*Classi Somarlediorum*," and "*heremi Normanni*," both in the *Chronica Pictorum*?

Does the expression *Jugulatio*, or *jugulatus est*, in the Ulster annals, imply strictly the cutting of a mans throat, or merely the putting him to death?

I remain,

Dear Sir,

Very sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 17th December, 1800.

---

## CLXXXIII.

TO THE SAME.

DEAR SIR,

Have the goodness to inform me, at your leisure, whether the continuation of Bede in your edition be the same with, or different from, that in mine, which follows *L. 5, C. 24*, beginning, "*Anno DCCXXXI Ceolunlf rex*," ending, on the next page, "*Anno DCCLXVI. Ecgbertus archiepiscopus*," and containing, in all, a short chronology of twenty-one dates.

It is probable that Pinkerton may be right in his etymology of *Somerlida*, of which I find an instance in the Saxon chronicle, grossly misunderstood by bishop Gibson. Pinkerton says these *Somerlids* are common in the *thirteenth* century, in which I find none at all. They are evidently pagan Danes. Your etymologists, *Verellius* and *Gudmund*, I am entirely unacquainted with, but *liod*, in the Saxon dictionary, is certainly explained *gens, natio* &c. and hence, they say, *Ludgate*, i. e. *populi porta*.

"*Classi . . . occisi sunt*" is manifest nonsense. Can we read *Classici*, which may mean *sailors* or *pirates*; or supply an imagined defect thus:

" *Classi* [advenientes] *Somarlediorum* [numeri] *occisi sunt?*"

I am satisfied, from what you say, that *Fraith heremi* is a corruption of *Straith*—something or other. *Straith* (not *Straith* or *Strath*) is the original Irish for *valley*, and very easily corrupted into *Fraith*.

You have yourself asserted, I perceive, that the "*daughter, or more properly sister,*" of Earl Siward, "was wife of Duncan, mother of Malcolm, and grandmother of David;"\* and I shall be very glad to learn that you had good authority for the assertion, being disappointed on looking into Dugdales *Baronage*. Fordun, a mere fabulist, says it was Siwards *cousin* whom Duncan married. Honest Androw of Wyntown appears to have known nothing of any such match.

You will permit me to observe that I think you have done great injustice to St. Columb, in depriving him of the patronage of *Inch-Colm*, in favour of a namesake who never existed. See the *Scotichronicon* (Goodalls edition), i, 6 (a note), and Keiths *Catalogue*, p. 236. Your reference to *Sim. Dun.* 8vo. p. 24, seems erroneous; and what Usher cites, from an anonymous life of St. Columb (if I have hit upon the right passage, as my

\* Notes on Wyntown, p. 475.



edition has no page 705), of his being first bishop of Dunkeld, is a mere Irish fable. Usher, an excessively weak man upon occasion, and of whom, I confess, Pinkerton has given a very just character, finding the chronology would not accord with the æra of the real St. Columb, fancies this bishop of Dunkeld to be a different personage; for which he had no countenance from the Irish book; and that this supposititious prelate is no other than the Pictish missionary, see Keith, p. 46. Bede, who knew more of St. Cuthbert than any other writer, and has left duplicates of his life, in prose and verse, never mentions him to have been the "disciple" of any St. Columba, nor was there, in fact, more than one saint of that name, though I am aware he is sometimes called *Columbanus*, which belongs, by right, to a different person.

Nothing, I perceive, escapes your attention: but it is impossible that the "*Epitaphium regum Scotorum*," of St. Ælred, which described the times of Edgar king of the Saxons, who died in 975 can be the *Chronicon elegiacum*, which, probably enough of the age of that historian, seems to be perfect, and has not a syllable about any Saxon king.

I shall, likewise, beg leave to give you an opportunity of defending or retracting what I take

to be another error. viz. that "in 681 *Trumwin* was appointed bishop of *Quhit-hern*;" which I not only find no ancient authority for, but is expressly contradicted by Bede, who says his see was at *Abercorn*: nor have I met with any other person than yourself who describes "*Quhit-hern*" as an island, for which, however, I doubt not, you may have good authority.

The oldest and most authentic notice of St. Kentigern, whom I am unwilling to part with, occurs, I believe, in a letter of Ralph archbishop of Canterbury to pope Calixtus, about the year 1122, where he mentions the *gesta Columbae*, "*et venerabilis Cantugerni, qui primus Glasguensi ecclesiae prae-fuit.*" The latter I take to have been one of the ancient lives made use of by Joceline.

Let me request your assistance in the explanation of a passage in *Ethelwerdus*, which distresses me very much. It is the following, at p. 845: "*Petias subdant plebs immunda, &c.* What can be the meaning of *Petias subdant*?

If I did not believe you to be both a diligent researcher and a sincere lover of truth, as well as the possessor of a liberal mind, which affords you pleasure in communicating to others part of the valuable and extensive information which your learning and industry have rendered you peculiarly

master of, I should not have taken the liberty to trouble you on these trifling and unimportant subjects.

I remain, dear Sir,

Very respectfully and sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 28th December, 1800.

---

#### CLXXXIV.

#### TO THE EDITOR.

. . .

You will have heard, I presume, that your friend Godwins tragedy of *Antonio*, which he expected to produce him 500*l.* was universally and completely damned. . . .

Public affairs, you see, are in a strange and critical situation, and there is no conjecturing how they will terminate. I hope, however, let what will be the consequence, your diligence and attention in business will in a few years render you perfectly independent and comfortable: "a consummation," in my opinion, "devoutly to be wished."

Grays Inn, 26th February, 1801.

J. R.

---

## CLXXXV.

TO MR CAMPBELL.

DEAR SIR,

Grays Inn, 1st March 1801.

I have for a long time meditated and wished to write to you, but one of the symptoms of the complaint I mentioned to you is a dislike, if not an incapacity, to write letters, even to my best friends, which leads me to put them off from day to day till they are never written at all.

I take the liberty to inclose a few corrections, &c. for your publication on Scottish poetry, in which your printer seems to have done you great injustice. Your intended excursion, I doubt not, will be much more correct.

As I presume you have not already bought, nor perhaps may have had it in your power to buy, Constables copy of the Sutherland case, it may not be too late for me to explain that I only want the *additional case by lord Hailes*, which if you could procure for me, along with his tract on the *Regiam majestatem*, or any other in quarto, except the "*Canons*" and "*Historical memorials*," which I already possess, I should take it as a particular favour; and suppose I could put you

in the way of sending me such a thing, if you should otherwise be at a loss. I wish also for the *fifth* volume of Johnsons "Scots musical museum," which I am unable to get here.

Your copy of the musick to the "Bankis of of Helicon" is essentially different from that given me by Edward Williams: but I readily allow that the former, if noted in an ancient MS. promises to be the genuine air.

I should be glad if, having the books by you, you would take the trouble of supplying me with the exact titles, in Erse, of the printed poems you mention, of Dugald Buchanan, 1770, Peter Stuart, 1783, Margaret Cameron, 1785, Kenneth Mackenzie, 1792, and Allan Macdougall, 1798, from whom you have given the beautiful and pathetic elegy on the death of Keappoch.

I have made two discoveries lately in the history of Fin-Mac-Coul. He is mentioned in Jocelins life of St. Patrick, written about 1180, as contemporary with that saint; but in a book of much greater authority, the Ulster annals, of which there is a translation in the museum, he is placed in the middle of the ninth century, or year 856, when it is sayed "*Cuhal-Fin*, with his *English-Irish (Hibernicè, ut alibi, Fingall,)* [was] put to flight by Ivar." This, if it mean the same

man, is a historical fact which cannot be disputed : but, at all events, he was a native, or inhabitant, of *Ireland*.

With my best wishes for your health and happiness and my respectful compliments to Mrs. Campbell (with whom, you know, I had the honour of dining),

I remain, Dear Sir,

Your very faithful

and obedient servant,

J. RITSON.

P. S. Since writing the above, which I kept by me in order to procure a cover, I have been favoured with your valuable present of Craigs Scots tunes, which I had never before seen ; though it cannot be true, as he asserts, that this collection was "the first of the kind," since Thomsons folio had appeared at least three years before. I hope to see you in the course of the summer, but dare not make a promise, I may again feel myself unable to perform.

J. RITSON.

---

## CLXXXVI.

TO MR. HARRISON.

Grays Inn, 21st March, 1801.

MY WORTHY, VENERABLE, AND VERY DEAR FRIEND,

I was favoured with your congratulatory compliments on the commencement of the nineteenth century by the hands of major Hutton ; and rejoice to learn that, in your advanced age, it finds you in health and comfort. It is the usual epistolary wish of the Spaniards " that your worship may live a thousand years," but I should be content, had I the power of effecting my wishes, to ensure you life and spirits to the end of the new century. At any rate, I hope your days will be as long as you yourself can desire, and that every day will furnish an increase of content and happiness. You know my sentiments with regard to other worlds, which, I believe, are not likely to change. My health is much impaired, my frame disordered, and my spirits depressed ; so that I have no hopes for myself of an eternal existence ; and am rather, in fact, disposed to wonder that I have already lived so long : having had the mortification to see many whom I loved and esteemed

drop from time to time around me at a much more immature age.

You will have heard, for peradventure you do not now read much, that our gracious sovereign has lately changed his principal ministers, who had been so many years in office, and were supposed to be fixed for life. This unexpected proceeding is generally understood to have been occasioned by the personal feelings of the king, and there is some reason for concluding that it will ultimately lead to a general and permanent peace; it being whispered that he has all along, in his own private opinion, been a determined enemy to the war.

I dare not repeat my promise to pay you a visit this summer, having already been compelled to break it: but believe me sincere in wishing for nothing so much, and that I will make every possible exertion to effect my purpose: and, in the mean time, remain

Your affectionate friend,

J. RITSON.

---



## CLXXXVII.

TO MR. WALKER.

DEAR SIR,

Grays Inn, 1st April, 1801.

I send you Maffei, *La Merope*, Poliziano, *Stanze*, Manfredi, *Le Semiramide*, and Salvini, *Il Catone*, as you desire. I, likewise, inclose Da Pontes bill, by which you will perceive what other books I have bought of him, and at what prices. Some are higher than those marked in the catalogue; but this advance, which is not considerable, was occasioned by the binding of certain articles, and the better editions or superior condition of others. The *Merope*, I observe, is not, as in your list, *colla Demodice*; but if you consider this defect as material, or object to the price of any of the rest, he has promised to take it back. He has also made out, on a separate paper, a list of books, taken from one I shewed him, with the prices at which he can afford to sell them.

You have not been very successful in your commissions at Strange's sale. Italian books, in fact, are very rare and *recherchés*; and in one instance (that of Luigi da Porto) you had put down thirteen *shillings*, instead of thirteen *guineas*. It actually sold for eight; and another copy was not

long since sold for eleven. You will see, however, by Leigh and Sothebys bill, what you have got, and at what prices. If any of the articles appear to exceed your commission, it is owing to my having left it to Mr. Leighs discretion to overbid a shilling or two, if he thought it too low.

The "Memoirs of Angelus Politianus," &c. are printed in the country, and no more than twenty-five copies were sent up to Cadell and Davies, which are all sold; though they have written for a further supply.

The information I wish to obtain, through your favour, from Trinity-college-library, is as follows:

"304. Jo. Flemings old English poems, 4to. parchment. G. 5.

497. A poem in old English.

2. The acts of Alexander in verse, 4to. F. 44.

590. A book of old English sonnets. B. 25."

The *titles*, that is, of these pieces, the *names* of the authors where they occur, and the *first line* of each.

I am, dear Sir,

Very sincerely and faithfully yours,

J. RITSON.

P. S. The *three* Gravinas, you will observe, are different works.

---

## CLXXXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

DEAR SIR,                      Grays Inn, 28th May, 1801.

By your letter of the 20th instant which I have just received, it appears that none of the parcels of books, letters, and accounts which I long since dispatched, under cover to "the rev. *Edw. Berwick, Dublin-castle*, to the care of Colonel Brownrigg, secretary to his Royal Highness the Duke of York," (No. 9, Portugal-street,) which I believe was the direction you gave me, though I have unfortunately lost or mislaid the particular letter which contained it, have come to your hands. The last parcel sent was the *Life of Politianus*. There are many articles remaining for you in my possession, which, I understand, I was not to send without further instructions.

It was impossible that I could furnish you with the second part of *Stranges Catalogue*; the sale began *to-day*, and a perfect copy was not even to be had *yesterday*. It is however a very trash collection, and contains nothing, I am persuaded, that would have attracted your attention. I have not the least doubt of the Rev. Alexander Irvines

ignorance or imposition. Who are the *Caledonian Bards*, and when and where did they exist? I believe, however, some valuable publications of genuine ancient Scottish poetry, by gentlemen in Edinburgh, of intelligence and accuracy, are in some forwardness, and will shortly make their appearance; among which is a considerable fragment of the translation of a French Romance, entitled *Cleriadus et Meliadice*, of great merit, found among the posthumous papers of the late Lord Hailes, and conjectured to be the work of Bishop Gawin Douglas, or, at least, of his age.

The new edition of Mr. Ellises *Specimens* has been recently published. It is a very elegant work.

I am much obliged, but will not trouble you, for Whytes book, as I feel very little satisfaction in such performances.

The little commission your politeness permitted me to trouble you with, and some titles or lists, interesting to yourself, were inclosed in one of the parcels sent at three different times. It will be very unfortunate if they have miscarried.

I am, dear Sir,

your very faithful

humble servant,

J. RITSON.

## CLXXXIX.

TO MR. MACPHERSON.

DEAR SIR,                      Grays Inn, 19th Aug. 1801.

I cannot leave town without apprising you that I have been misled by those slippery historians, John Brompton, Ralph of Diceto, Roger of Howden, and even Simeon of Durham, who all agree that Edwy, or Edmund, eldest son of Edmund Ironside, married the daughter of *Solomon*, king of *Hungary*. But this turns out to be impossible, as he did not ascend the throne before 1063, when the children of Edward, the younger brother, seem to have been pretty well grown up. It must, therefore, have been *St. Stephen*, king of Hungary, to whom Edwy and Edward were sent in 1016 ; and if the latter's wife were actually (as Malmsbury says), the *sister* of his *queen*, we are certainly still to seek for the grandmother of *Margaret*. Henry the second, whom you mention, as the saint, the chaste, and the lame, was emperor of Germany between 1002 and 1024, and is said to have had a sister, *Gisele*, married to the above *St. Stephen*, king of Hungary ; but the accounts are by no means clear. I flatter myself,

however, that you will be able, at your better leisure, to throw some effectual light upon this obscure and interesting subject.

Wishing you health and happiness till I have the pleasure of seeing you again, I remain

very sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

---

CXC.

TO MR. ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE.

DEAR SIR,

Grays Inn, 1801.

I have left at your agents, to be sent you by the next parcel, a quantity of copy, which, though not in a very handsome condition, I think the compositor will be able to make out, according to my projected arrangement. I have likewise inclosed the wood-cuts, but should you perceive, on getting a fair proof, that your printer can not do them justice they would be better omitted ; but, with care and neatness, as they were designed on purpose for the book, I should flatter myself they would be rather an improvement than an injury.

My copy of Bellenden wants an entire leaf, fo. clxiii, sig. N n ii, the catch-word being *Beweler* ;

and also part of fo. C c 2, being the last leaf. Some leaves in my copy have been supplied from a different edition, and whether both were page for page I have not at present an opportunity of ascertaining. If you will do me the favour you mentioned, as the book is a great rarity, and to me the more valuable, from having been the property of Mr. Steevens, I shall pay all the attention in my power to supply the defects of your own copy with an accurate transcript, and feel myself very much obliged to you into the bargain.

I am sorry to say that I have looked over (for it is impossible that any one should read) your publication of "Scottish Poems of the sixteenth century" with astonishment and disgust. To rake up the false, scandalous, and despicable libels against the most beautiful, amiable, and accomplished princess that ever existed, whose injurious treatment, misfortunes, persecution, imprisonment, and barbarous murder, will be a lasting blot on the national character to the end of time, and which were, as they deserved, apparently devoted to everlasting oblivion and contempt, to stuff almost an entire volume with the uninteresting lives of such scoundrels as regent Murray and the laird of Grange, to publish in short such vile, stupid,

and infamous stuff, which few can read, and none can approve, is a lamentable proof of a total want of taste or judgement, a disgrace to Scottish literature, degrades the reputation of the editor, and discredits your own. I must be free to tell you that I will not suffer such an infamous and detestable heap of trash to pollute and infect my shelves : it is therefore under sentence of immediate transportation, though much more fit for some other situation than a gentlemans library, or even a booksellers shop. I confess, at the same time, that the libel against the Tulchan bishop, though excessively scurrilous, has much merit, and would have been admissible in any collection of a different description.

The plates shall be sent before you are in want of them, as I have to get Mr. Heath to alter the first ; so that proper spaces must be left at the head of each division.

I am afraid you will find the present copy, with the glossary, and two essays, which will be afterward sent, too much to be comprised in one volume, so that if you think *that* enough, you may reject the extracts from Douglas, Harvey, Thomson, &c. though there will be scarcely sufficient matter left for a volume of any consequence. However I submit this to your own discretion,



and shall readily attend to any thing you may suggest.

I am, dear Sir,  
your very sincere friend,  
and humble servant,  
J. RITSON.

P. S. Is Dr. Beattie dead? I perceived the other day his life and portrait in a window,

It has just come into my mind that I have it in my power to transcribe a Scottish poem of the 15th century, never printed, which, if it have sufficient merit, I shall send you in a few days, and shall delay the parcel for that time.

Do you happen to recollect the nature or contents of Num. 779 in your last catalogue, described as "a Collection of Scots Poems, ancient and modern, *scarce*, 3s. 6d. Edin. 1766," 12mo. which I do not remember to have met with.

---

## CXCI.

TO MR. HARRISON.

Grays Inn, 1st Feb. 1802.

MY DEAR AND VENERABLE OLD FRIEND,

It was not till yesterday that I could get an answer from Mr. Wilson about the fate of your letter to the Chancellor. He does not recollect to

have seen it, and is much vexed that he had not an opportunity of answering it : but you may expect to hear from him shortly. He will give Mr. Hickes a living ; but, if you particularly wish for Middleton-Tyas, you must not apply for it before it becomes vacant, and then no time is to be lost. This is all I have to say upon the subject ; but I do not doubt that his lordships letter will afford you full satisfaction.

I only staid a night at Stockton ; and have never been well, nor am so at present, since my return. I was looked upon one day as a dying man, having received a stroke of the apoplexy, by which, for the space of twenty-four hours, or thereabout, I was entirely deprived of memory, intellect, and speech ; but got relief by the application to my temples of leeches and blisters. This was thought a narrow escape, and the next attack, I suppose, will carry me off.

You will acquaint Miss Chipchase that *Harwood Common* is delineated in Armstrongs map, as running from *Crook-burn*, by those parts of the *Tees* which are called the *Weel* and *Caldron-snout*, down to *Widdy-bank*, where I recollect to have been after I had crossed the river on a hanging bridge of wood, very different, both in shape and situation from that she mentioned. *Harwood*, likewise,

seems to be a straggling town and *parish*, as a *church* (which I saw) is depicted in the map, hard by the road from Alston-moor. *Marwood-park* runs by the Tees-side, between Eggleston and Bernard-castle. So that we, certainly, have both *Marwood* and *Harwood*; though the latter, at least, is not I believe, any where noticed in Hutchinsons wretched history.

Not being able to procure a cover in time to send my letter by this days post, I must keep Mr. Burton Fowlers by me till a further opportunity.

Major, or Captain, Hutton desired to be remembered to you : and, with my best wishes for your health and happiness, I remain,

My dear and much respected friend,

Most affectionately and sincerely yours,

J. RITSON.

---

## CXCII.

To WALTER SCOTT, Esq.

Grays Inn, 10th April, 1802.

MY DEAR SIR,

The transcript of *Sir Orpheo*, which I was favoured with by our inestimable friend, is very diffe-

rent from the copy I already possessed, and, though many lines are the same in each, the latter is so much enlarged in one place, and so abridged in the rest, that I am unable to make a perfect piece of both ; more particularly as the Edinburgh extract is singularly corrupt. You seem to have been a little too hasty in asserting " there is only *one* edition of it in the Auchinleck MS." as at Number xxxv. fol. 261, you might have found a fragment intitled *Lay le freine*, which begins precisely in the same manner as the copy from the Harleian library :

" We redeth oft and findeth ywrite."

It would, at present, however, be of no use to me.

I have the pleasure to inclose my copy of a very ancient poem, which appears to be the remote original of *The wee wee man*, and which I learn from Mr. Ellis, you are desirous to see. The MS. whence it was transcribed is conceived in a tolerably fair hand, but has not, I strongly suspect, been written by an Englishman, as characters and corruptions frequently occur in it, which I never met with elsewhere. It has, nevertheless, a certain degree of poetical merit, for so remote an age, though Mr. Ellis declined inserting it in his *Specimens*, because he could not " think of printing what he did not understand." I do not despair,

however, of seeing it completely elucidated in the hands into which it is about to pass.

I, likewise, transmit you Geoffrey of Monmouths metrical life of Merlin the wild, which you wished to peruse, and which you will have the goodness to return me at your leisure, as I have some intention of printing it.

I have not yet had the pleasure of receiving your admirable publication ; which, however, I am very anxious to possess, and shall value the more as being a present from the excellent editor.

I lament, indeed, that I should have ever expressed myself in such intemperate language upon the subject of your favorite *Souters of Selkirk*, and should have been no less mortified, had you omitted a single syllable in your refutation. It will, at least, furnish me with authenticated facts, to which I was previously a perfect stranger, and, if I recollect, you acknowledged you could not support professor Tytlers romantick story of the *ballad, tune, &c.* which, you know, were the chief objects of my attack. As to the rest, I should have been very glad if you could have proved that these valiant *souters* won the *Battle of Floddon*.

The fragments of early Scottish songs you have so obligingly favoured me with, serve at least, to diminish the unfavourable opinion I had enter-

tained of Allan Ramsay, with respect to his first publication of the *Tea-table miscellany*, as I conclude from these specimens, that without he and his poetical associates had exerted themselves on that occasion, he would have been altogether unable to form a collection of such size and merit, imperfect as it is.

You will not, I flatter myself, forget the ballad of *Robin Hood and the Pedlar*, if there be any prospect of recovering it.

I have the honour to subscribe myself,

Dear Sir,

Your much obliged and ever

faithful humble servant,

J. RITSON.

---

### CXCIII.

TO THE EDITOR.

Grays Inn, 17th April, 1802.

I have scarcely been a single day well since my return; I have had two attacks of the apoplexy; and labour, in fact, under a variety of complaints, for which I can obtain no effectual relief, and from which I can never expect to be free.

I inclose you a draught, which I presume will

answer your purpose. I should be glad to write to you more frequently and punctually, but the lowness and depression of my spirits prevent me from writing to any one.

You must send me the remainder of the impression of "The North-country chorister," and let me know what I have to pay for it. Some of your corrections were right, some are wrong. The song of Tommy Lin was taken from a printed copy.

Health and fraternity !

J. RITSON.

---

#### CXCIV.

TO WILLIAM SHIELD, ESQ.

DEAR SHIELD,

On applying to you some years ago, to time a few old tunes, which had been pricked down for me by Edward Williams, the Welsh bard, you said you could not make any thing of them ; but, if I would bring him up to you, you could take them down from himself ; this was, at that time, either inconvenient or neglected, and he has ever since been in Wales ; but, having come to town for a few days, he is very ready to gratify me by

dictating the tunes to you, if your convenience and readiness to oblige can be united. Will you, therefore, my worthy friend, have the goodness to appoint a time for us to wait upon you, for the above purpose ? favoring me with a speedy answer by the same conveyance.

Your affectionate friend,

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 15th May, 1802.

---

CXCV.

TO MR. SCOTT.

Grays Inn, 10th June, 1802.

My Dear Sir,

I had once or twice called at Cadells for "The Minstrelsy of the Scottish border," without success : "They had no orders :" but a few weeks after, Heber told me there was a copy lying in the shop, with my address ; which you may be sure, I lost no time in fetching away. I, therefore, return my most grateful acknowledgments for your obliging present of the most curious and valuable literary treasure I possess ; but, as some one says, that "I may lose no drop of this im-



mortal man," I shall still endeavour to procure the frontispiece. I mean, however, to be very chary of it, and by only perusing a single poem, or ballad at a time, extend my gratification which will be exquisite, to the most distant period. Every thing is excellent throughout, both in verse and prose, and I am happy to congratulate you on its being so much the object of popularity and admiration. The few remarks I have to suggest, are almost too trifling to trouble you with, but, peradventure, you will have no objection to run your eye over them, such as they are, in contemplation of the second edition.

P. lxxv. n. Elderton, I humbly submit can never have been the author of *The ex-ale-tation of ale*, which is manifestly a composition of the 17th century, long after his death, if not first published in 1642. He is certainly mentioned in it; but in a manner to prove he could have had no hand in the manufacture :

" For ballads Elderton *never had peer.*"

P. 95. "John o'Brigham" was more probably of the family of David Brigham, of whom, as a fellow-countryman of some reputation, you will not be displeased to meet with the following notice (which occurs in Nicholson and Burns *History of Cumberland*, under the date of 1350) :—

“ The man was ne’er so wight nor geud,  
 But worthy Wallace durst him bide ;  
 Nor ever horse so wild or weud,  
 But David Brigham durst him ride.”

The authors call him “ a Scottish knight of great valour,” who married the daughter of Alexander Bonekill, Lord of Uldale in Cumberland, and widow (as they say) to Sir John Stewart (who was slain at the battle of Falkirk) and thereby “ transferred the inheritance of [Bonekill] to the family of Brigham. Wallace,” they add, [whose companion he was,] “ was of an extraordinary strength, and David Brigham an exceeding good horseman, whereupon the Scots made this rhyme.”

P. lxxxv. Your *Shellycoat* seems to be the Northern-English goblin, which when confined to a town or city, York for instance, Durham and Newcastle, had the name of *barguest*, but in the country-villages was more usually called *brag*, who constantly ended his mischievous pranks with a horse-laugh.

P. 226. *The life-wh’ake* is the common name and custom of watching a dead body in the north of England ; and by no means peculiar to papists ; whose ceremonies, however, may be very different.

Volume II. p. 32. I believe *Jil*, or *Gillian* is always the name of a woman. There is one in-

stance, however, which may suit your purpose : *Witton-Gilbert*, the name of a village four miles west of Durham, is pronounced throughout the bishoprick, *Witton-Jilbert* ; and *Gilbert*, I presume is the name of a *Saint*.

P. 187. I can assure you on the most decisive authority, that the Duke of Wharton was not the author of the parody you allude to, which in reality was the composition of Captain Philip Lloyd, one of his hangers-on, and a potent fellow at a bottle ; who has taken care to notice himself in the ballad :

“ Lloyd was his name, and of Gang-hall,\*  
Fast by the river Swale.”

I have received the tradition, more accurately I imagine, than you relate it, in Cumberland, and even in *Eden-hall*, where I had the pleasure of examining the *glass* and dining with the steward. The duke, after taking a draught, had nearly terminated “ The luck of Edenhall,” if the butler had not been quick enough to catch it in his cloth, on its way to the ground. The fairies, in fact, had left the glass at a well they frequented, whence the family-butler fetched his water, and where he

\* So in the P. C. but I am assured the true reading is *Crack-pot-hall*, actually the name of a farm in Swaledale belonging to the Duke.

found it, along with this couplet, in a piece of paper close by :—

“ If this glass do break or fall,\*  
Farewell the luck of Edenhall.”

It is carefully preserved in a leathern case, and not now suffered to be drunk out of, though the lee of wine is still manifest at the bottom.

P. 193. I did not understand the meaning of *Ymp-tree* ; but I shall readily adopt your first signification in my glossary (of which I have just returned the first sheet) ; but *apropos*, with respect to the *Lai du Fraine* : you will admit that it was by no means unnatural for me to imagine it the romance of *Syr Orphewe*, which in the Harleian MS. (though not in yours) begins with the same prologue. I am now satisfied, by your obliging explanation, that it is the fragment of or version from the French *Lai du Fresne* by *Marie de France*, of which, when the Museum opens, I shall finish my transcript : in the mean time, I would be still further indebted to you for a copy of it as it is, and, in return if you wish it, you shall have one from the French original.

You may be well assured, my dear Sir, that there are no men in the world I am so desirous to see as your friend Leyden and yourself : but I

\* Otherwise thus : “ If ever this should break or fall.”

have three objects for my autumnal excursion : Paris, Wales, Durham, (which includes Lothia , formerly part of the kingdom of Northumberland ; ) and am perfectly distracted in making my choice ; which I fear, will fall upon the *national library* : the following year, however, may have an equally strong inducement in favour of the *advocates*.

You may depend on my taking the utmost care of " Old Maitland " and returning it in health and safety. I would not use the liberty of transcribing it into my manuscript copy of Mrs. Browns ballads : but, if you will signify your permission, I shall be highly gratified.

Adieu, my dear Sir, permit my most respectful compliments to your amiable lady, and my cordial good wishes to your excellent friend : as to yourself, believe me to be with the utmost sincerity and attachment,

Your very grateful friend, and

much obliged obedient humble servant

J. RITSON.

P. S. In II. 37. " The *clinking* bell " is very different from " the *passing* bell," which obtained its name from being rung at the time the body was in its last agonies and the soul about to *pass* to heaven, and was necessary (being christened

for this purpose) to clear the air of the devils which were in waiting to lay hold of it.

P. 85. The *Laidley worm of Spindleston-heugh* (not *Bamborough*) was the composition of Robert Lambe, vicar of Norham, as he told me himself.

---

## CXCVI.

## TO THE SAME.

MY DEAR SIR,                      Grays Inn, 28th Feb. 1803.

It is with unfeigned contrition, that I have been so remiss in acknowledging your agreeable and obliging favours. This apparent neglect and actual inability, was the attack of a paralytical stroke about the time I had formed an intention of going to Paris : but, at any rate it was totally destroyed by William Laing the bookseller, who had been there, and on his return gave me a call, with such an unfavourable account, that I laid aside all thoughts of it ; and instead of a voyage to France I was visited with this cursed paralysis, and getting somewhat better, though still under the derangement of its fatal effects, I was recommended by my physician to go down to Bath for a month,

to drink the waters and boil in the baths, and there I was when Mr. Thomson (who had departed before my return) sent or brought your letter and parcel. I received I allow, some benefit by air and exercise, though rather too late to enjoy them long enough : but the waters were altogether unprofitable and worthless, to which Doctor Beddoeses reply was : " I, always thought so ; but if you will come and put yourself under my care for six weeks, I will promise to cure you of all your complaints." My time, however, being exhausted, I could only say that I would endeavour to come down the next season, in better time to partake of the benefit of his prescription ; *though he seemed to think I was too likely to lose my life, before another season.* I brought from Bath, but how I got it I never knew, a much worse complaint than I carried thither, which I understand to be incurable.\* In other respects I am somewhat better, though I do not expect ever to be well : so that I can hardly flatter myself with another pleasant and interesting visit to Laswade-cottage ; only, the stay of our amiable and accomplished friend, Doctor Leyden is some atonement ; though it cannot possibly be expected to be long.

\* A rupture.

You receive, inclosed your ancient and curious ballad of "Old Maitland," which I understand is to make its appearance in the new edition of your "Minstrelsy of the Scottish-border;" so that I have thought it unnecessary to transcribe it, though our obliging friend assured me I might have done it with your perfect good will.

If you have not yet received a copy of the "Metrical romances," Mr. Nicol, the publisher, assured me [he] would take care to send it to Edinburgh. I remain,

My dear Sir,

Your much obliged, and ever  
grateful and affectionate friend,

J. RITSON.

---

## CXCVII.

### TO THE EDITOR.

I am sorry not to have been able to send your 10*l.* in the shape of July and January dividends : but I assure you I have been much distressed, and obliged to pay large debts and borrow for time and purpose ; but you may assure yourself of receiving it early in May : "*O consobrino mio, digo, paciencia y barajar.*"



What became of the old manuscript French ballad, of which you were to versify the untranslated stanzas. If you have returned it to me, tell me when and by whom, or how. If you have it, send it, done or undone, with all possible expedition : for I have looked in every hole and corner of my chambers without success ; and if you have kept it by you for so long a time, " May all the fiends of hell revenge my cause."

Grays-Inn, [2d.] April, 1803.

P. S. Will you join me in a morning-paper ?

---

In a short note to the Editor, written a few days afterwards, Mr. Ritson says : " I do not mean you to do any thing to my transcript, and shall expel the stanzas of the poet-laureat ; as I have two prodigious geniuses, who are ready to give me every satisfaction." By one of these *geniuses* (Sir Walter Scott) an excellent translation was accordingly made, which has been presented to the public. See *Ancient Songs and Ballads*, 8vo. 1829, vol. 1. p. 157.

## CXCVIII.

TO MR. SCOTT.

MY DEAR SIR,

I had scarcely entered the park (through which I enjoyed a delightful walk), when I recollected that *Termelinodunum* must certainly be Latin for *Dumferline*, and on looking into Irvin's *Nomenclatura*, found the fact verified : but whether any nobleman or baron was ever distinguished by that title or addition, I am unable to ascertain.

I learn from the *Memoirs of Viscount Dundee*, the following names :

The Honourable Sir Donald of the Isles, who, from indisposition returning home, left his son, young Sir Donald, with Dundee.

The Honourable Sir M'Donald of Glengary.

Sir John M'Lane.

The Captain of Clan-Ranald.

Sir Hugh Cameron of Lochiel.

Pitcur was killed : Colonel Gilbert Ramsay, M'Donald of Largo, his tutor and all his family ; Glengary's brother and many of his relations and five cousin-germans of Sir Donald of the Isles.

The author mentions, as coming up to Colonel

Cannon at Dunkeld two days after the battle, the Steward of Appin, the M'Gregors, the Fergusons, Keppoch, young Lochiel, the Frazers, the Gordons of Stradown, Glenlivet and the M'Farlans.

The quarto book which I referred to, as containing ancient German romances in rhyme, is entitled "*Symbolæ ad literaturam Teutonicam Antiquiorem, &c.*" but the Editors name I have not preserved.\* It is, however, by no means equal to the collection you shewed me.

The title of the other book I mentioned is "*The-saurus Antiquitatum Teutonicarum,*" à *Johanne Schiltero*, 3 tomis, *Ulma*, 1728, folio. It is scarce and high-priced, the second volume is in the British Museum, and a complete copy in the library of the Society of Antiquary[s], (which may be that which was in the Harleian Collection). Its contents are enumerated in Wanleys additional volume to Hickeses *Antiqua 'literatura' septentrionalis*, p. 319. It is certainly a most valuable and curious book.

In the old ballad of "Anthony now-now" is the following passage on Henry the 8ths victory over the Spaniards at Boulogne :

\* It was edited by Peter Frederick Suhm, and printed in 1787. Ed.

“ He batter'd their percutis  
 And made their bolts to bow,  
 He beat their men to *acculus* :  
 O Anthony, now, now, now.”

What is *Acculus*, which is printed (in the only edition of Charles the 2ds time) with a capital *A* and in italics ?

I have the honour to be,

Dear sir,

Your most obliged and ever

grateful humble servant,

Grays Inn, 11th May, 1803.

J. RITSON.

## CXCIX.

To MRS MARY RITSON.

Grays Inn, 23 May, 1803.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I am much affected with the contents of your son-in-laws letter, which I had begun to answer, with an intention to send off my answer on Saturday, but a gentleman calling upon me, took up so much of my time, that I should have been too late for the post, so that I was obliged to postpone it to monday.

I am exceedingly sorry to hear that my amiable and affectionate cousin Mary is indisposed, and most sincerely wish her better.

I should not have conceived that the present Lord Lowther would adopt the violence and oppression, which, I presume were never practised but by his immediate predecessor. I have been told when I was in Westmoreland, that some time ago, in a similar contest between Lord Thanet and his tenants, as is projected at present in a different quarter, the tenants were successful; I shall be glad to hear if Lord Lowther should compel his tenants to have recourse to the like measures, that they have been equally victorious. I often wished and tried to learn whether the customs of the Lowther manors were similar to those of Appleby and the other manors in that neighbourhood, but was never able to meet with any satisfactory information, that lord having locked up all the court-books, court-rolls, records, deeds and writings, which, however according to the laws of England he might be compelled to produce.

I am still more distressed at what I have yet to say as well to yourself as to your son-in-law; when I was the last time at Hackthorp I do not doubt but I would and could have been ready to assist both of you with whatever money you might

want, but times are unfortunately very different at present ; being over head and ears in debt. Having a great opinion of an acquaintance who did business on the Stock-Exchange, I was induced in hope and flattery, to speculate with all the money I had or was able to get. In my way from Durham towards London I came by Stockton, to see my nephew and remaining friends, where in a letter for me, I understood (in consequence of the sudden peace, by which so many in my situation suffered much greater losses) that I was utterly ruined, though partly by the mismanagement of him in whom I had placed confidence ; the whole of my loss was considerably above a thousand pounds. I have been forced to sell my uncles land in Strickland, which I had always intended for my dear cousins Jane and Mary, and shall as long as I live lament that I did not make it secure. You see, therefore, I have undergone the fate of old Coles dog (according to the story), he would take the wall of a waggon and was crushed to death for his ambition !

My present unhappiness prevents me from adding any thing more, than begging you and your whole family to accept my sincerest wishes for your health, happiness and better times, hoping that things will not go so bad with you as

you seem to apprehend, having heard a very flattering character of the present lord. I should be glad to pay you my last visit in the latter end of this year, but the precarious state of my health forces me to employ what little sum I can save or procure to have recourse to the promised assistance of Dr. Beddoes, of Bristol Hot-wells.

I remain your affectionate cousin,

J. RITSON.

---

CC.

To MR. SCOTT.

Grays Inn, 2d July, 1803.

MY DEAR AND HONOURED SIR,

I attended the "literary meeting" of Longman and Rees for the first time on Saturday last. Here I received your highly acceptable letter, inclosing your delightful version of Herbert Kennedys "*Praelium Gilliecrankanum*." You may be assured, if it be ever printed by me, there shall be no *blank* in the *first* stanza; but with respect to the *eighth*, I know not what to say without 'applying' to yourself, with great humility, for another line, if the present rime cannot be rendered more analogous:

"To course like *stags* the lowland *whigs*."

this, my dear sir, cannot remain for your own sake ; all the rest being conceived in your usual fluency, which I have ever regarded with pleasure and admiration.

At the same time, I had put into my hands a large paper copy of the new edition of " the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," in three volumes, for which I beg your reception of my most respectful and sincerest thanks, though having an utter aversion to a large paper book, I must beseech you to permit Longman and Rees to present me with a small paper copy, which I shall preserve with due respect and attachment as long as I live : it shall be elegantly bound, and fortunately, with the admirable ornament of " Hermitage-castle," which they readily gave me at Cadell and Davieses on receipt of the former edition. Your booksellers promised to send the work, along with Thomas Campbells " Pleasures of Hope," but it is not yet arrived.

I have put into Mr. Longmans hands, at his own request, for the opinion of some critic he is used to consult, my " Life of king Arthur : " but whether the partners to whom I was recommended by our worthy friend, Dr. Leyden, will undertake the publication I much doubt, as Mr. Longman thinks my *orthography* unfavourable to



its sale, and Mr. Rees was apprehensive I should treat the Welshmen with too much familiarity, an apprehension, I confess, [which] will turn out to be well founded.

I was admitted into the duke of Roxburghes library by means of our good friend, George 'Nicol,' in order to collate his graces black-letter copy, which is more different from that of Ramsays "Tea-table Miscellany" than you would have been apt to imagine, not one single stanza being left according to the authors original copy : not that I mean to say it is not frequently improved by Ramsays, or whomsoevers interpolations or variations. The word "Minstrel Burn" does not occur in the dukes copy, though the authors surname is there preserved ; the two lines stand thus :

" But Burn cannot his grief assuage  
While as his days endureth."

*Apropos*, do you apprehend that the date of your copy (1714), is too early for Ramsay (certainly, at least for his "Tea-table Miscellany," which was not published before (1724), and that the original copy has been altered by some one else, before Ramsay, I believe, is known to have wrote any thing, and inserted from your copy by Ramsay in that book ; the three additional stanzas being

apparently omitted as of inferior merit. Dr. Douglas, to whom I took the liberty of writing, at the instigation of Leyden, informed me that he knew neither the baptismal name of *Burn*, nor any thing about him ; and really I am afraid your own enquiries will be equally unsuccessful. I was led, in 'publishing' my " Scottish Songs," into the blunder I have committed " Minstrel-Burn," from David Herds collection, which, for some reason or other, I followed in preference to Ramsays : I am satisfied, however, by both facts of " Burn," and " the words of Burn the violer," that he was the real composer, and not Alexander Home. The six concluding lines before " the words " are these (the two first having been given above) :

" To see the changes of this age  
Which day and time procureth ;  
For many a place stands in hard case,  
Where Burns were blyth beforrow ;  
With Humes that dwelt on Leader-side  
And Scots that dwelt in Yarrow."

I shall be perfectly satisfied with your translation of " the Remembrances of Chastelain ;" you may wish to run your eye over the manuscript notes in Mr. Douces copy of the edition of 1537, b. l. which I should properly have given you when here. You will have the goodness to remember

"Richards song." I wait with impatience for  
"Robin Hood and the Pedler."

I take the liberty to request a help for the  
"*Bibliographia Scotica*," which you must necessarily be familiar with, and which is not to be had here :

The full title of George Wallace, Advocate, on  
the Origin of Ancient Peerages, &c.

I have the honour to remain,  
my very dear Sir,  
your much obliged and  
ever grateful humble servant,  
J. RITSON.

---

CCI.

TO ROBERT SURTEES, ESQ.\*

DEAR SIR,                      Grays Inn, 5th of July, 1803.

I wish much to have a translation of this singular epigram of bishop Aldhelm, as literal as possible. I sent a copy to Richard Heber, but if in town I have heard nothing from him. The two

\* Of Mainsforth, near Durham, then of Christ Church, Oxford.

versions I have got are by Mr. Henley and William Godwin (who, by the way, had no right to meddle with it, as he was only intrusted to show it to George Dyer), though I am satisfied with neither ; but with these, such as they are, and the help of Ainsworths Dictionary, I have endeavoured to make a sort of translation, line for line, as well as I could. Mr. Henley says, that *Arthurs* or *king Arthurs wain*, is a title familiar to his memory (meaning as a constellation like *Charleses*, a corruption of the Saxon ceopler, or *churls*,) *wain* (*Auriga*, the waggoner upon the horns of *Taurus*), though I have never met with *Arthurs wain* in any book or map. Lydgate, indeed, mentions "Arthures plough ;" Gawin Douglas, bishop of Dunkeld, "Arthures hufe ;" and William Owen, the Welshman, *Arthurs harp* (*Lyra*) ; all three constellations, though I know not where to look for them. Now, my dear Sir, I should esteem it a very great favour and obligation, if you will condescend to take the trouble to make this literal version more accurate and palatable, either by yourself, or by applying to some Oxonian who may have made these obscure and obsolete words a study, as, for instance, your friend, Reginald Heber ; who, as Mr. Brisco informed me, you think will be superior to his brother Richard. I

got, by your favour, and Mr. Briscos attention, what I wanted out of the old manuscript of Robert of Brunne, in the Inner Temple library, and have Mr. Norris, the librarians permission, to go at any time to make what other extracts I may want; so that I am exceedingly obliged to all three. I remain,

dear Sir,

with great gratitude and respect,

your ever faithful friend, and obedient

humble servant,

J. RITSON.

#### DE ARTURO.

Sydereis stipor turmis in vertice mundi,  
 Esseda famoso gesto cognomine vulgi,  
 In gyro volvens iugitèr non vergo deorsum,  
 Cetera ceu properant cœlorum lumina ponto.  
 Hoc ' dono ditor quoniam' sum proximus axi.  
 ' Ryphæis Scytia qui latis' montibus errat,  
 Vergilias æquans numeris in arce polorum;  
 Cui pars inferior stygia letheaque palude  
 Fertur ' inferni' fundo succumbere nigro.

*S. Aldhelmi Poetica nonnulla. Moguntia, 1601, 12mo.*

(p. 63.) [*Obiit hic sanctus 25<sup>o</sup> Maii, anno 907.*]

#### OF ARTHUR.

With starry troops I am environed, in the pole of the world,  
 In a war-chariot, a famous surname of the people being  
 born,

Turning around continually, I do not decline downward,  
Like as the other lights of the heavens haste to the sea.  
I am enriched with a gift, forasmuch as I am next to the pole.  
He who wanders in the spacious Ryphaean mountains of  
Scythia,  
Equalling in numbers the seven stars in the top of the poles ;  
To whom the lower part in the stygian and lethean marsh,  
Is reported to fall down in the black bottom of hell.

---

## CCII.

## TO THE EDITOR.

I inclose you a draught for £20. £10. of which to be lent in your name to Mary Ritson, widow, on her note payable on demand at the rate of £4. interest ; and the other £10. to Thomas Thompson, husband of my cousin Jane, in the same manner, without mentioning my name. It is very strange you should take it into your head that any thing is the matter with me ; it was just as odd that Ridge, who thought he had only three days to live, and had gone into Sussex, wrote me a letter which I answered the same day. As his complaint was chiefly a severe and troublesome cough, I recommended to him a few boxes of *Patirosa*, which I offered immediately to send if it were not

to be had at Lewes ; he was content however to go to an apothecary in that place, who gave him something altogether different under the same name ; but he got well and called upon me, promising to come and see me again on the approaching Sunday ; this, at the same time, he did not perform, and I know not at present in what condition he is, though he is among his relations in Sussex : happening to call one evening at the *Chapter Coffee-house*, I was told by Isaac, the waiter, that Ridge had informed him that I was very much indisposed ; but what was the matter with me I could no more learn from him than I can do from you. I was about to insure my life in the equitable assurance office for £1000. as Jack Reed had done a year or two before his death, and expected from a principal clerk that every thing would be ready at a certain time, when the chief director asking me if I ever had a complaint ? owning, in reply, that I had received a paralytical shock the preceding year ; when I called at the appointed time, I learned that the directors declined the business, so, without a single word, I turned my back and came away as cool as a cucumber. The money I have made by the sale of part of my books, which I did not care for, still lies at the bankers till the

price of consols fall to nothing in consequence of the expected French invasion, when I shall invest all I have. As to ever coming to Stockton again, you may assure yourself, you never uttered a more foolish expression in your life, than that I "would find there a considerable increase of health and happiness!" *Apagè, mendax! credat Judaeus Apella!* If I were to leave town in September for a few weeks, it would be a visit to Wales or Devonshire, which are really healthy situations: but I have not yet made up my mind; to tell you the truth, there is not a place in the united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, that I hate and detest so much as your admired *Stockton-upon-Tees!*

your kinsman and friend,

J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 11 of August, 1803.

P. S. Never insert a comma, nor any point whatsoever, before *and*, *or* or *nor*: I am convinced it is a gross absurdity.

N. B. You say nothing in answer to my question which paper you prefer: I tried *the Morning Chronicle*, which is so full of advertisements, that I recurred to *the Morning Post*, though, in fact, there is not a single paper of any worth. I would advise you to inter your bust of Bonaparte till he makes his appearance.



## CCIII.

## TO THE SAME.

You may be well assured that your bill upon me for £155. payable at sight the 31st of December will be duly honoured.

Christopher is more apt to lie than to perform his promise. Get you a few copies of "Gammer Gurtons Garland," and send them by one of your parcels to Richard Wilson.

Tell me a story which I have forgot upon the subject of this couplet :

" And *Hunley*, scowling to the distant main,  
With cloudy head involv'd in murky rain."  
*Cleveland Prospect.*

You will repeat what you told me, that this house was visible from Portrack, and inhabited by two maiden ladies, whose surnames you mentioned ; but give me likewise their baptismal names and that of their father ; and if you please, say some few things of the situation, appearance, &c.

Will you make me a present of parson Graveses " History of Cleveland ?" I will give you in return all my late publications, if you have not got them already ; then, such as are to come :

"the Life of King Arthur," which I [have] finished; "Memoirs of the Celts," which is laid by for the present; and "the Life of Jesus, surnamed Christ, or the Anointed," which I have just begun—what do you think of him?

You must either make use of my collection of Durham words or send me yours. Parson Boucher, vicar of Epsom (who is preparing a glossary of ancient and local words, which he tells me is in great forwardness), anxiously desires to peruse the Durham words.

Can you procure me an excellent——(No, I'll make this request another time.)

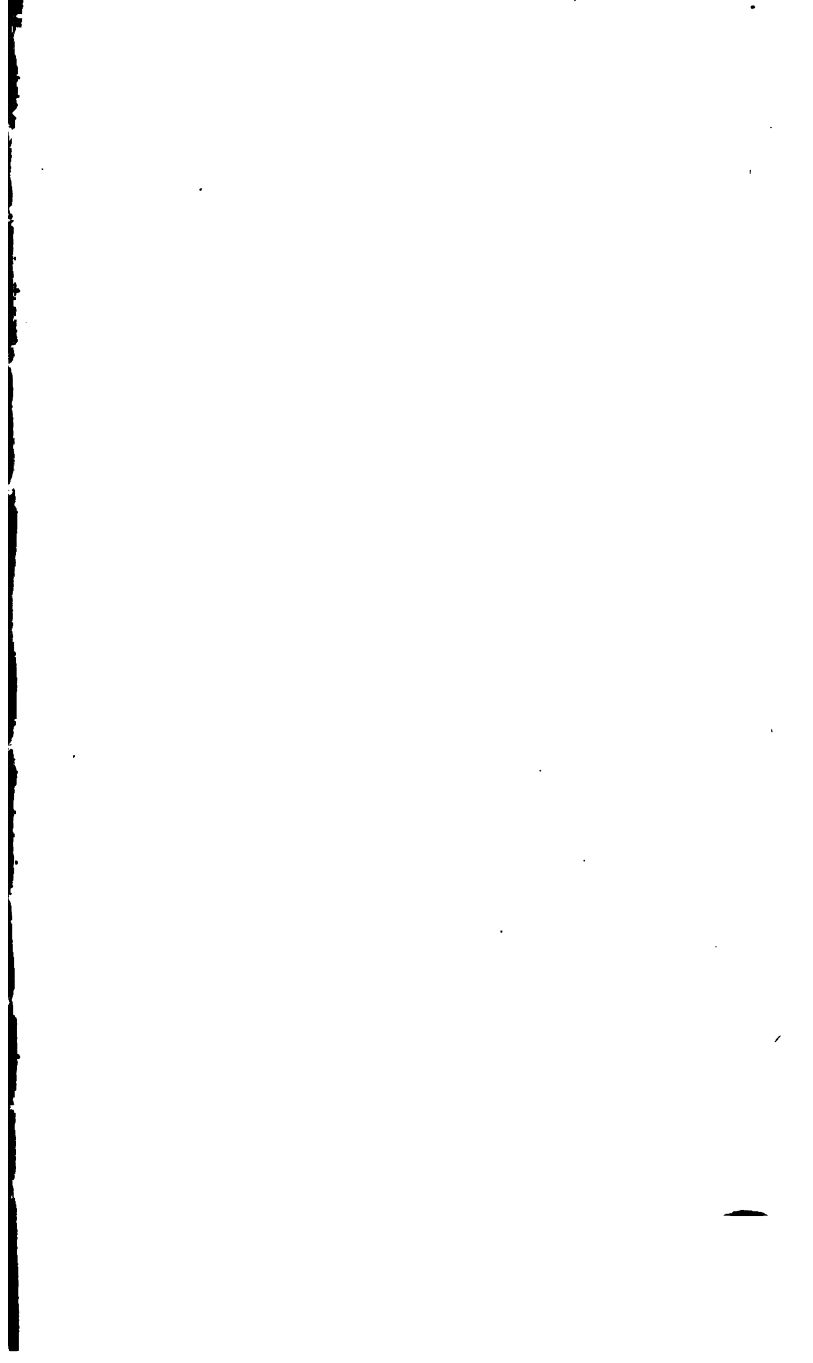
Farewell, for the present! Give me a letter now and then, and don't suppose I have any dislike to write to you: it is not so; but in fact, I have so many *irons in the fire* and *other fish to fry*, that my letters are generally procrastinated till they would come too late and I should have nothing to say.

From your kinsman, friend and  
well-wisher,

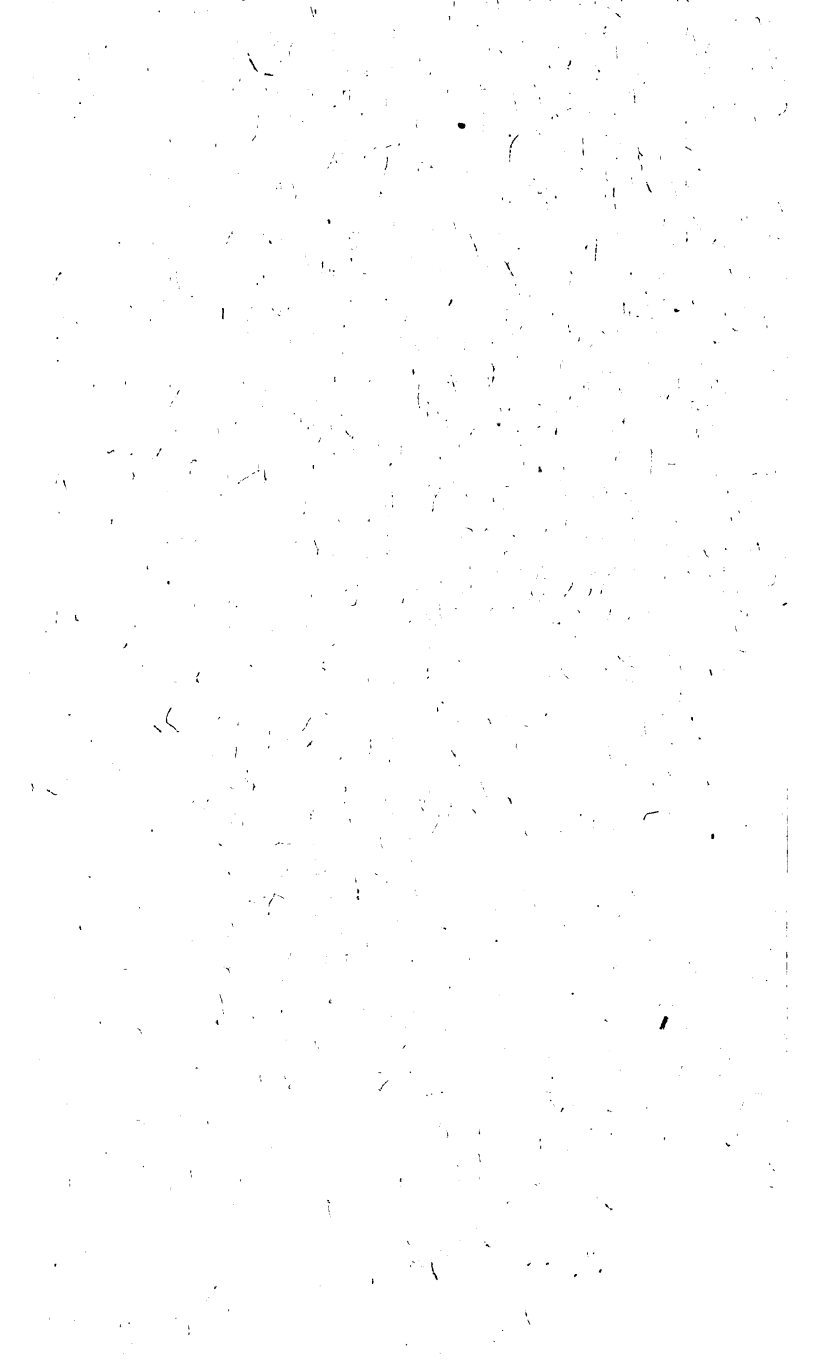
J. RITSON.

Grays Inn, 16th of August, 1803.

THE END.









JAN 3 - 1928